

PROOFS *of* PROPHETHOOD



SHAYKH ABDEL HALEEM MAHMOUD



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What proof do we have that Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was a true Prophet, a bearer of a Divine Message? This is one of the most important things for every Muslim to know, both for their own benefit and in order to help them to explain Islam to non-Muslims.

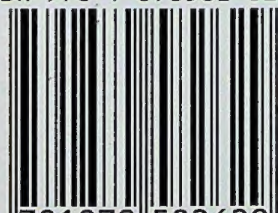
Every sound book that has been written about the Prophet ﷺ provides solid evidence of his Prophethood, since they illustrate the life and character of a perfect personality — a life which no liar, impostor, or ignoble man could possibly have led. The author has consulted the authentic classical sources on Sira (biography) and Hadith (Tradition), and quotes extensively from them and from secondary literature including the writings of orientalist scholars. He discusses at length the life of the Final Messenger, his miracles, and the methods of establishing the truth of his Prophetic stature.

The author of this book, the Egyptian scholar Shaykh Abdel Haleem Mahmoud, was Rector of al-Azhar University, Cairo, the oldest seat of learning in the Muslim world. He produced a number of major works on Islamic doctrine and spirituality. Presented in a fluent translation by Habib Bewley, *Proofs of Prophethood* is an important contribution to modern literature in English on fundamental aspects of Islamic thought and doctrine.



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In the Name of Allah, All-Merciful, Most-Merciful

Praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all the worlds.

Peace and Blessings be upon the most noble of the Prophets and Messengers, and upon his Family and Companions and all those who heed his Message until the Day of Judgement.

“O Prophet, We have sent you as a witness, and a bringer of good news and a warner, a caller to Allah by His permission, and a light-giving lamp. Give good news to the believers that they will receive enormous bounty from Allah. Do not obey the unbelievers and the hypocrites, but disregard their abuse of you. Put your trust in Allah. Allah is enough as Protector.”

(33: 45-48)



Author's Introduction

Proving the existence of Allah has never been a religious problem, as knowledge of His existence is a central part of human nature. Allah, glory be to Him, has named Himself the Outwardly Manifest. Whether man looks to the horizon or looks within himself, He is Outwardly Manifest: everything in creation is a Sign indicating His existence.

"We will show them Our Signs on the horizon and within themselves." (41:52)

"And in yourselves as well. Do you not then see?" (51:21)

Many of the great shaykhs have written on this subject, shaykhs such as Ibn 'Ata'illah al-Iskandari, Abu'l-Hasan ash-Shadhili and Abu'l 'Abbas al-Mursi. Shaykh al-Iskandari wrote, commenting on an aspect of this matter:

"My God, How can we seek proof of Your Existence in that which is dependant upon You for its own existence? Can that which is other than You possess a portion of outward manifestation that You do not have, and be that which gives You Outward Manifestation? When have You been absent so that You need proofs to indicate Your Presence? And when have You been so far away that we must use traces to reach You?"

The reality is that in attempting to seek proofs of Allah's Existence, we have deviated from something that is an integral part of our own natures.

Thus the core question of the *deen* is not providing proof of Allah's existence, but to provide proof of the truthfulness of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. Indeed, many of our illustrious ancestors, may Allah be pleased with them, wrote

books for this very purpose, books such as *Dala'il an-nubuwwa*, *A'lam an-nubuwwa* and *ash-Shama'il*.

Indeed, the reality is that every sound book that has been written about the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is in fact a book which provides proof of his prophethood, as each book illustrates the virtuous life of a perfect personality: a sort of life which it would have been impossible for a lying and ignoble man to have led.

The *Sahih* Collections of al-Bukhari and Muslim are among the most priceless of books casting light upon the life of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. They contain examples from his pure life, instances of his amazing miracles and *hadiths* relating to his good character, all of which serve to confirm the truthfulness of our master Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. If you were to read any of the numerous chapters in the *Sahih al-Bukhari*, you would find more than enough to still your heart of any doubts regarding the prophethood of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. The various chapters of al-Bukhari deal with varying subjects – such as man's connection with his Lord, and man's connection with his fellow Muslims and society in general – all conveyed to us on the tongue of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. Any person of sincere intention and pure heart who reads these *hadiths* will undoubtedly believe with certainty that Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is a Messenger sent with the Truth from Allah – Exalted is He.

This is not the first time that I have contributed to a book concerning the life of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. I wrote an introduction to the book *Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah*, in which I was compelled to refer to the *sira* literature many times; indeed, throughout that work, I had to go back to the source books in order to attribute quotes to their original sources. Additionally I also wrote a book entitled *The Messenger: glimpses of his life and lights of his guidance* which consisted of short extracts from his noble life story, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. I also wrote about the Prophet's Night Journey, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

Much of the reading that I have done in the past few years has been about the *sira* of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and this book is a direct result of the many happy hours I have spent surrounded by books of *sira* and books of *hadith*. As the subject is such a broad one, however, it would have been impossible for a person like me to compose a work of this nature single-handedly. Therefore I enlisted the participation of others: I have taken directly from the works of the great men of *hadith*, such as Imam al-Bukhari, Imam Muslim and Imam al-Bayhaqi, may Allah be pleased with them, and have quoted directly, sometimes word for word, large segments from previous works on *sira* where I felt that the words written by their authors clearly expressed the message that I myself was trying to get across.

I have even, on occasion, during the course of this book, relayed the opinions of some Orientalists and others from amongst those whose hearts remained closed to Islam but who nevertheless had wise and meaningful things to say about the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

While putting this book together, I have travelled in many lands, in which I consulted the various reference books available. Additionally I spent time in front of the Ka'ba in Makka and in the *Rawda* of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in Madina, hoping for openings and enlightenment from Allah and for Him to give success to my endeavours.

Praise belongs to Allah and He is the One who grants success. Praise is due to Him for all the favours and gifts that He has granted me during the time that I have spent putting this book together.

Before the reader begins to read this book, I would like to point out something: some of the chapters in this book may be considered as treatises on proofs of prophethood in their own right, because I followed the different chains of thought through to their logical conclusions. Therefore I would like for anybody reading this book to halt at the end of each chapter and reflect on the particular proof or sign of prophethood found therein and thereby benefit more greatly from reading it.

I ask Allah, the Exalted, to grant me and my book success and to make it a means for guidance and the expansion of people's

hearts and breasts. I ask Allah, glory be to Him, the All-Hearing, the One Who responds, to make this book benefit all who come into contact with it.

Dr. 'Abdu'l-Halim Mahmud

Chapter 1

A Sketch of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him

*"But Allah bears witness to what He has sent down to you.
He has sent it down with His knowledge.
The angels too bear witness;
Allah is enough as Witness."* (4:165)

Section 1

The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is mentioned in many *ayats* of the Qur'an. We find among the things said by Allah about His Messenger:

"O Prophet, We have sent you as a witness, and a bringer of good news and a warner, and a caller to Allah by His permission and a light-giving lamp." (33:45-46)

"Whoever obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah. If anyone turns away, We did not send you to them as their keeper." (4:79)

"Say, 'If you love Allah, then follow me and Allah will love you and forgive you for your wrong actions. Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful.'" (3:31)

The relationship of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, with his Lord was one of slavehood and love, while the relationship of Allah, may He be exalted, with His Messenger was one of care and solicitude.

Because of that relationship, Allah instructs us to take the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, as an example. He says, glory be to Him:

"You have an excellent model in the Messenger of Allah, for all who put their hope in Allah and the Last Day and remember Allah much." (33:21)

Allah, glory be to Him, also orders us to accept everything that the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, gives us and forgo everything he forbids us; and He even threatens us if we do not comply. Allah, the Exalted, says:

"Whatever the Messenger gives you you should accept, and whatever He forbids you you should forgo. Show fear of Allah – Allah is Severe in Retribution." (59:7)

Section 2

The secret behind this instruction is in the fact that:

1. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, did not speak from whim, nor did he deviate from the Straight Path. Allah swears an oath to this effect when He says:

"By the star when it descends, your companion is not misguided or misled, nor does he speak from whim. It is nothing but Revelation revealed." (53:1-4)

2. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, embodied the Qur'an in all his actions, whether walking or talking, still or moving. His whole being was the Qur'an. 'A'isha, may Allah be pleased with her, said, when asked to describe the character of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, "His character was the Qur'an."

Anyone whose character is the Qur'an is somebody whose example should be followed. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had an immense character, just as Allah says in His Noble Book:

"Indeed you are truly vast in character." (68:4)

Section 3

Therefore, the only way that we can arrive at a true and clear picture of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is through studying the Qur'an and coming to know the Qur'an well. It is not easy to understand the Qur'an fully in this way, though, because every day we find new meanings in the Qur'an which were previously unknown to us. Every person who reflects on the Qur'an deeply and sincerely will find that new meanings open up to him the more he reflects. These new meanings are sometimes specific to a certain individual and sometimes applicable to mankind as a whole; but they all help to paint a clearer picture of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

The reverse is also true. If we study the *sira* literature and the collections of *hadith*, and reflect on what we find in them regarding the life and character of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, we will understand something new every single day. These inspirations are, in their own way, a clarification and explanation of certain aspects of the Noble Qur'an.

The Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was, as we have already mentioned, integrated with the Quran at every level of his being – heart, soul and body – and in every level of his consciousness – belief, character and law-making.

It was the aspiration of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, that the people of his *Umma* also embody the Qur'an in their characters, so he worked towards that aim throughout the time he spent delivering the Message. The position of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, as regards his *Umma* is explained to us by Allah in His Noble Book:

“A Messenger has come to you from among yourselves. Your suffering is distressful to him. He is deeply concerned for you, gentle and merciful to the believers.” (9:129)

Peace and blessings of Allah be upon you, O Messenger of Allah!

There are many *hadiths* that demonstrate the Prophet's aspiration for his *Umma*, such as when he, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, says to his Companions, "My likeness and your likeness is like a man who lights a fire. The grasshoppers and moths start to fall into it and he tries to drive them away from it. I am holding you back from the Fire and you are slipping from my grasp." (Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*)

This is the connection that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, has with his Lord, and this is the connection that he has with his *Umma*. He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, ascended to the highest heaven and, indeed, went beyond that, reaching the Lote Tree of the furthest limit and seeing some of the greatest signs of his Lord. He then went beyond the Lote Tree of the furthest limit and reached the station of being two bow-lengths away from his Lord, or even closer.

He ascended to the highest horizon and in doing so went to the very limits of creation and beyond. He was indeed closer than two bow-lengths and became suffused in the highest horizon. His Lord directly bestowed upon him the method of being connected to Him: that method is the prayer. Then he returned to illuminate the earth, a light-giving lamp and a mercy and guidance to all mankind, calling to Allah with inner sight, he and those that follow him.

One of the righteous once said, "The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, ascended to the heavens and then returned to the Earth. I swear by Allah that were I to have ascended to the heavens I would not have tried to return to the Earth again.

The Messenger, however, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was a Prophet and Messenger and was always in direct contact with Allah and therefore always in Heaven.

He was a Prophet, connected to mankind and conveying the divine Message, complete and undiminished; and he was a Messenger, as the Qur'an confirms when it describes him as 'a human Messenger'. His humanity was what connected him to people and his Secret connected him with his Lord. He was with the rest of mankind by Allah's will, and on account of Allah's Order and Instruction; he was amongst the rest of mankind bearing Allah's

Words and Message; he was placed among us as a Messenger directly from Allah.

If we understand the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in this way, then it becomes clear that we can say that he was constantly with Allah and that he was and is with Allah from the moment that his Mission began until the time when he spends the night with his Lord. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "I am not the same as you: I spend the night with my Lord."

Section 4: A Human Messenger

Allah, Exalted is He, says:

"Say: 'I am only a human being like yourselves who has received revelation.'" (18:105)

It is true that the Messenger of Allah was a human being and no Muslim has ever presumed to say otherwise. But the crucial difference between him and the majority of mankind is that he has received revelation from his Lord, and Allah would not bestow His Words upon a human being unless that human being was akin to a shaft of light: of pure heart and transcendent spirit. As Imam al-Busayri said in his *Burda*:

The extent of what is known about him is that he is a human, and that he is the best of Allah's creation in its entirety.

Section 5

There are some people who read the *ayat*, "Say: 'I am only a human being like yourselves who has received revelation'" (18:105), and consider the significance of the *ayat* to be that Allah refers to His Messenger as a human being. Therefore they start to talk about the ordinary human aspects of the character of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and bring them to the fore. They concentrate so hard on this aspect of the Prophet's character

that they all but forget Allah's Words "*who has received revelation*," and thus they miss the point and stray into areas of discourse into which they should not enter.

Indeed, it is not uncommon for certain people in today's times to have the effrontery to talk about the fallibility of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, when it comes to his personal opinions. These people say that the opinions of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, were sometimes correct and sometimes mistaken, and this becomes one of their chief criteria when they examine the *hadith* literature. These people have either forgotten or ignore Allah's Words concerning His Prophet: "*Nor does he speak from whim*." (53:3) They have forgotten that he, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, "*has received revelation*" and have forgotten Allah's instruction to the believers: "*Do not make your summoning of the Messenger the same as your summoning of one another*." (24:63)

These people also forget that some problems may have more than one correct solution and may be approached in different ways: one of the solutions gentle and merciful, the other harsh but just. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, who was always in the right, would always take the solution that was in harmony with the merciful and compassionate nature that Allah endowed him; the solution that embodied the wider Islamic injunction of mercy. As Allah says: "*We have only sent you as a mercy to all the worlds*." (21:106)

Allah makes this clear in the Qur'an, and by mentioning the fact that His Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in situations in which it was possible for him to deal with people with harshness and severity, instead took the path of compassion and mercy, is in fact praising him. Allah says: "*He is gentle and merciful to the believers*." (9:129)

Allah, glory be to Him, did not nullify any universal edict given by the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, or abrogate any general judgement passed by him. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, did not act except in accordance with the guidance of his Lord and the promptings of his inner sight. Allah bears witness to that when He says: "*Truly you are guiding to a Straight Path: the Path of Allah*." (42:49-50)

In all the incidents to which deviants cling, claiming that the Messenger of Allah made mistakes, Allah used them to demonstrate to mankind the incredible mercy and immense character of His Messenger. An example of this is the verse: "*Allah pardon you! Why did you give them permission?*" (9: 43)

Those who take argumentation and controversy as their *deen* like to mention this verse. They say regarding it that pardon only comes when there has been a mistake or error made.

We say to these people and their like that there are many literary devices of this nature within the Arabic language. For example, the Arabs say, "May Allah forgive you, why are you making things so hard on yourself? May Allah pardon you, why do you tire yourself on account of these people?" – and what they mean by this is, "May Allah be pleased with you, why are you exerting yourself so much?" The above-mentioned verse is an example of this.

Indeed, if you were to link this verse with its sister verse in *Surat an-Nur*, the matter would become abundantly clear to you. Allah says: "*If they ask your permission to attend to their own affairs, give permission to any of them you please*" (24:60), thus empowering the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, to make his own choice: to give them permission or not to. The Prophet, then, is not being taken to task in this verse – far from it – rather he had had a choice. When he gave them permission to stay behind and not fight, Allah sent down this verse (9:43) to let him know that even if he had not given them permission, they would have stayed home anyway on account of their hypocrisy. This verse was not sent down as an implicit objection to the Prophet excusing them (from fighting), but as an extremely subtle praise of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, for there is no doubt that such permission could only stem from a merciful heart.

It was from this merciful heart that all of the Prophet's judgments emanated and, indeed, by ruling with mercy, he was acting in harmony with the Qur'anic injunction: "*We have only sent you as a mercy to all the worlds.*" (21:106)

We can deal with every instant seized upon by those with argumentation in their hearts in a similar way.

Section 6

Despite what we have said above, we propose to further clarify the difference between those who focus on "*a human being*" and those who focus on "*who has received revelation*".

The following story, related by Ibn 'Ata'illah al-Iskandari in his exposition of a poem by the *wali* of Allah, Abu Madyan, may Allah be pleased with them both, illustrates this beautifully:

"One of the sultans of the past visited the tomb of Abu Yazid [al-Bistami], may Allah be pleased with him, and asked, 'Is there anyone here who met Abu Yazid?' An old man was pointed out to him who happened to be present at the time. The Sultan asked him, 'Did you hear any words spoken by Abu Yazid?' The man replied, 'Yes, I heard him say, 'The Fire will not burn anyone who sees me.'

The sultan was amazed by these words and said, 'How can Abu Yazid say that, when the Fire will burn Abu Jahl and he saw the Prophet?' The old man replied to the sultan, 'Abu Jahl did not see the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. He only saw an orphan in the care of Abu Talib. If he had really seen the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, the Fire would not burn him.'

The sultan understood the man's words and appreciated his response. He understood that Abu Jahl had not seen him with the honour and greatness due to him, or as an example to be followed, or in the belief that he was Messenger of Allah – and if he had seen him in this light he would not have been burnt by the Fire – but had seen him with scorn and disdain, and in the belief that he was merely an orphan [in the care] of Abu Talib. Seeing him in this light did not avail him anything."

The point that we wish to take from this story is not from the words of Abu Yazid, but from the answer that the old man gave to

the sultan; that is: 'Abu Jahl did not see the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, but merely saw an orphan in the care of Abu Talib.' It is the viewpoint held by Abu Jahl that we want Muslims to rise above and steer clear of.

True believers do not deliberately fall into sin; instead, whenever they start to focus on the humanness of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, sin creeps up on them and takes them unawares, and they start to see nothing but his human aspect.

What is astounding about these people is that when they start talking about and focusing all their attention on the fact that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is only a human being, they consider their views to be progressive and modern, whereas the truth is that their views are exactly the same as those that the Orientalists and Christian missionaries have adopted in their attempt to diminish the impact of the Messenger on their own peoples. This point of view – seeing the Prophet merely as a human being – was not invented by the Orientalists; in fact, they were simply following the example set by their commander-in-chief, Abu Jahl.

Therefore, any Muslim writer who focuses solely on the human nature of the Messenger is following the example set by the Orientalists and Abu Jahl. He is not being progressive or modern. He is, in fact, being extremely regressive, for he has taken his viewpoint from someone who lived more than thirteen [now more than fourteen] centuries ago – from a man who was the epitome of ignorance and who was darker than dark: Abu Jahl.

When it comes to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, there can be no talk of *ijtihad* and then of a right or wrong answer being reached. The positions taken by him are no less than judgements stemming from a noble and merciful heart, and Allah makes this very clear when He mentions the merciful nature of His Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace; a mercy that even encompassed many whose evil intentions made them unworthy of receiving it.

It is a known truism that it is the strength or weakness of a man's religious feeling that makes him lean towards one of the two camps: that which focuses on the "*human being*" aspect and that

which focuses on the "*who received revelation*" aspect. The one who has no faith sees only the Prophet's human nature and the one whose faith is weak focuses most of his attention on the fact that he was a human being. As a man's faith grows, he begins to focus less and less on the fact that he is a human being and more and more on the fact that he received revelation. Eventually some reach the station where they only see the fact that he, peace and blessings be upon him, received revelation and almost forget that he is a human being.

We can represent this as a measuring rod: one end representing Allah's Words "*Say: 'I am only a human being'*" and the other end representing Allah's Words "*who has received revelation*" or "*as a Messenger*". The level of a Muslim's faith fluctuates between these two extremes: closer to the end that represents Allah's Words: "*who has received revelation*" when his faith is strong, and closer to the end representing Allah's Words "*Say: 'I am only a human being'*" when his faith is weak. This is the most accurate measure of the strength of a person's belief, for the amount of weight he attaches to the Words "*Say: 'I am only a human being'*" or the Words "*who has received revelation*" is directly proportional to the strength of his faith. Imam al-Busayri, may Allah be pleased with him, said:

*"Leaving only that which the Christians claim about their prophet,
Praise him in any way that you desire."*

Section 7

may well be asking yourself about the kind of person who sees the Prophet only in the light of the Words "*who has received revelation*": what does such a person see and how does he see it? What is the viewpoint that distances us from seeing him, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, as an orphan in the care of Abu Talib and brings us closer to seeing him as the example for mankind? What should a believer's view of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, be?

The reality of the situation is that the only way a person can obtain a truly perfect picture of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is by reaching, or almost reaching, his level and that is impossible. Despite this, however, it is still easy for us to relate pictures provided by other people about the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. The following two images are those formed by 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, the first before he was Muslim and the second after he had embraced the *deen*:

The first image 'Umar formed of the Prophet was that he was no more than an orphan child in the care of Abu Talib. This was before Allah guided him to Islam. 'Umar intended to kill this orphan because he saw him as someone who was breaking apart the Quraysh with his teachings. However, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, made supplication for him, saying, "O Allah, strengthen Islam with the most beloved to You of these two men: 'Amr ibn Hisham and 'Umar ibn al-Khattab." The supplication was answered to the benefit of 'Umar and Allah guided him to Islam. He kept constant company with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, from that time on and partook of his blessing and excellence. Allah prepared the way for him to become the second caliph of the Muslim community and strengthened Islam through him, both during the life of the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and after he had passed on.

This great man, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, whom Shaytan feared so much that if he saw him taking a path he would take a different one, and whose opinion was confirmed by the Qur'an on many an occasion, and the one who said "Sariya, the mountain",¹ formed a very different picture of his master and his beloved friend, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, after his acceptance of Islam.

As we have said, a person's viewpoint of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, varies according to his belief. We have also noted that 'A'isha, may Allah be pleased with her, stated that "His character was the Qur'an." As we know, it is impossible

1. Once, while 'Umar was delivering the Friday sermon in Madina, he suddenly shouted, "Sariya, the mountain!" Sariya was leading an expedition in Persia and heard 'Umar's voice warning them of an attack.

for a person to completely encompass the Qur'an, so how could it be feasible for a person to fully comprehend or demonstrate the noble character of the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace?

Because of the high level of 'Umar's faith, however, the picture he paints of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is a profound one. We will relate it below, attempting to explain its deeper meanings. Any explanation will be in brackets:

'Umar ibn al-Khattab was heard to say, after the death of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, "[I ransom you] with my father and mother, Messenger of Allah. There was a palm-tree trunk you used to deliver your sermon from. When the people started to come in greater and greater numbers, you took a *minbar* to stand upon so that they could hear you. The tree-trunk pined for you after your departure from its side, and continued to moan until you placed your hand upon it. Then it was silent. Your community has even more right to pine for you now that you have left us."

(The incident of the pining of the palm tree is related by al-Bukhari and Muslim and nearly all the other *Sahih* collections and books of *sira* with multiple chains of transmission. One version, related by al-Bukhari on the authority of Ibn 'Umar, states that: 'The Prophet used to deliver his Friday sermon from beside a tree trunk. When he took the *minbar*, he moved to it and the tree trunk pined for him, so he came to it and placed his hand upon it. Then it was silent.'

"I ransom you with my father and mother, Messenger of Allah. The excellent regard with which He views you has reached such a high level that He has made obeying you the same as obeying him. Allah Almighty says: '*Whoever obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah.*' (3:79)

"I ransom you with my father and mother, Messenger of Allah. The excellent regard with which He views you reached such a high level that He sent you as the last of

the Messengers, but mentioned you as the first of them. Allah, may He be exalted, says: '*When We made a covenant with all the Prophets – with you and with Nuh and Ibrahim.*' (33:7)

"I ransom you with my father and mother, Messenger of Allah. The excellent regard with which He views you has reached such a high level that He has made it so that the people of the Fire, while being punished in the various levels of Hell, wish that they had obeyed you. Allah says: '*They will say on the Day their faces are rolled over in the Fire, 'If only we had obeyed Allah and obeyed the Messenger!'*' (33:66)

"I ransom you with my father and mother, Messenger of Allah. Even if Allah gave Musa son of 'Imran a stone from which water flowed, that is no more astonishing than [the fact] that water sprang forth from your fingers.

(Water did not spring forth from his noble fingers, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, on one occasion only, but on several occasions. This is related by al-Bukhari, Muslim and others in their *hadith* collections, as well as in the books of *sira*, with multiple branches. This indicates how often it must have occurred. One of the versions found in al-Bukhari is related by Jabir ibn 'Abdullah. He said, 'On the day of Hdaybiyya, the people were afflicted by thirst. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had an bowl in front of him from which he made *wudu*'. The people came up to him and said, 'We have no water with which to make *wudu*' or to drink except that which is in your bowl.' The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, placed his hand in the bowl, and the water started to flow out from between his fingers as if they were springs. We all drank and made *wudu*.' Jabir was asked, 'How many of you were there?' He replied, 'Even if we had been one hundred thousand it would have been enough for all of us. There were fifteen hundred of us.')

"I ransom you with my father and mother, Messenger of Allah. Even if Allah gave Sulayman son of Dawud the wind to come and go at his beck and call, that is no more astounding than the Buraq upon which you made your night journey to the Seven Heavens and then were back in time to pray the *Subh* prayer on level ground. May Allah bless you.

(We will discuss the miracle of the Night Journey and Ascension, Allah willing, in a special chapter devoted to it.)

"I ransom you with my father and mother, Messenger of Allah. Even if Allah gave 'Isa son of Maryam the ability to bring the dead back to life, that is no more amazing than the poisoned sheep which talked to you after it had been cooked and roasted. Its leg said to you, 'Do not eat me! I am poisonous.'"

(Ibn Sa'd relates in his *Tabaqat*: "Sa'id ibn Muhammad narrated from Muhammad ibn 'Umar that Abu Salama said, 'The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, would not eat *sadaqa*, but would eat something given as a gift. One day, a Jewish woman gave him a sheep that had been roasted. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had begun to eat from it, when it said to him, 'I am poisonous.' The Prophet [immediately] said to his Companions, 'Raise your hands from it for it has informed me that it is poisoned.' They raised their hands from it [and stopped eating it], but Bishr ibn al-Bara' died. The Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, summoned the woman to him. He said to her, 'What made you do such a thing?' She replied, 'I wanted to know what you were. If you were a Prophet it would not have harmed you, but if you were a king I would have freed the people from your yoke.' He ordered that she be executed.")

"[I ransom you] with my father and mother, Messenger of Allah. Nuh called for his people to be punished. He

said, 'My Lord, do not leave a single one of the unbelievers on earth.' (71:28). If you had made supplication against us in the same way, we would all have been destroyed. Even though your back was stamped on, your face bloodied and your tooth broken, you refused to say anything but good for us. You said, 'O Allah, forgive my people, for they know not what they do.'

(The Prophet's face was bloodied and his tooth broken in the battle of Uhud: both al-Bukhari and Muslim relate its occurrence. As for the *hadith* in which the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, says, 'Forgive my people, for they know not what they do', that is related by al-Bayhaqi in his book *Dala'il an-Nubuwwa*.)

"I ransom you with my father and mother, Messenger of Allah. More people followed you in the short period of time in which you lived among us, than followed Nuh in the long period of time in which he remained among his people; and many people believed in you, whereas only a few believed in him.

"I ransom you with my father and mother, Messenger of Allah. If you had sat only with people who were your equal, you would never have sat with us. If you had married only wives who were your equal, you would never have married our women. If you had eaten only with people who were your equal, you would never have eaten with us. But, by Allah, you did sit with us, marry from our women and eat with us. You wore woollen clothes, rode donkeys and ate on the floor. You did all this because of your great humility, may Allah bless you and grant you peace."

Section 8

It is very apt that we mention another image of the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, formed by a man who did not know the Prophet personally but was a widely-travelled man of deep and profound thoughts who used his powers of

deduction. He exercised great caution in forming his opinion of the Prophet so as to steer clear of slander and calumny. That man was Heraclius.

A letter came to him from the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, calling him to Islam. He did not ignore it or rip it up, but read it carefully and paid close attention to it. Having read the letter, he desired to form a true picture of its writer, so he asked if there were any Arabs in the city who knew the Messenger. He was informed that there were some Meccan traders in the city who knew Muhammad personally, so he ordered that they be brought before him. One of the traders present was Abu Sufyan. Heraclius asked which of the traders had the closest family ties with the Messenger, and Abu Sufyan replied that he had. He asked him to come near and said to the others, 'I am going to ask him about a few matters. If he lies to me then let me know.'

Abu Sufyan, speaking at a later time, said, 'By Allah, if it had not been for my fear and feeling of shame that people would report that I was a liar, I would have lied about him.'

In our narrative, we will leave out the first few questions asked by Heraclius and the answers given by Abu Sufyan, as the conclusions drawn by Heraclius make the substance of the questions very clear. Heraclius, after he had finished asking his questions by means of an interpreter and, in the presence of his own retinue and that of Abu Sufyan, began to summarise back to Abu Sufyan what he had heard from him.

Heraclius said, "I asked you about his lineage. You told me he possessed a noble lineage amongst you. Messengers are always sent from the noblest lineage of their people.

"I asked you if there was anyone else amongst you who had said the same things as him before him. You said that there had not been anyone else. If there had been anyone else saying the same things before him, I would have said that he was merely a man copying the example of another.

"I asked if any of his forefathers had been a king. You said that they had not. If any of his forefathers had been a king, I would have said that he was a man trying to regain the kingdom of his ancestors.

"I asked if any of you had suspected or accused him of telling lies before he started saying these things. You said that they had not. I think it impossible for a person who does not tell lies about people to start inventing lies about God.

"I asked if it was the nobility of your people who have followed him or the weak and poor. You said that it was the weak and poor who have followed him. It is always they who first follow the messengers.

"I asked you if his followers were on the increase or on the decrease. You replied that they were on the increase. It is always like that until faith is complete.

"I asked if anyone had left his religion feeling let down by it after he had embraced it. You replied that no one had. That is the way of true belief: when it enters the heart, it does not leave.

"I asked if he was treacherous and deceitful. You replied that he was not. Messengers never act treacherously.

"I asked what he instructs you to do. You said that he instructs you to worship Allah and not ascribe any partners to Him, that he forbids you to worship idols, and orders you to perform the prayer and to be trustworthy and chaste. If everything that you say is true then he will, one day, come to own the very land upon which I am standing.

"I knew that he was coming, but I did not suspect that he would be from amongst you. If I knew that I could dedicate myself to him, I would take it upon myself to go and meet him. If I were in his presence, I would kneel down and wash his feet."

Heraclius formed this image of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, using nothing but his logic. Therefore, it is possible for every person who has a broad mind and has experienced the world to reach a conclusion similar to his. Moreover, any person who believes in Allah and His Messenger must reach the same conclusion as Heraclius: that if he were in the presence of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, he would wash the dirt from his feet. And the only reason he would wash his feet is that "*he has received revelation*", and any person whom Allah has seen fit to honour with His revelation must be worthy of having his feet washed by us.

The conclusion reached by Heraclius should not be considered as something which only applied while the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was alive, but should be a watchword for Muslims, regardless of the epoch in which they live. For the Messenger, peace be upon him, lives amongst us today as his message, guidance and teachings remain. The way one may wash the dirt from his feet today or, to put it in another way, the way one may give him the respect that he is due, is by following his guidance, by holding fast to his *Sunna* and by honouring him to a degree that befits the fact that Allah chose him to convey His message.

In talking about the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and the qualities that a messenger must possess, Heraclius focused somewhat on the qualities of honesty and sincerity. The fact is that every person who knew the Messenger, peace be upon him, and was not blinded by bigotry, envy or their own whims and desires, also recognised these two qualities in him. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, possessed those qualities before and after the start of his mission, from the time of his birth to the time of his death. If the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had delivered a piece of news to the worst of his enemies, that man would have accepted the report as fact, without doubting it for a moment.

For example, Umayya ibn Khalaf, a mortal enemy of the Prophet, once exchanged heated words with Sa'd ibn Mu'adh, may Allah be pleased with him, and tried to prevent him doing *tawaf* of the Ka'ba. Sa'd ibn Mu'adh said to him in the heat of the argument, 'I heard the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, say that he would kill you one day.' Umayya ibn Khalaf became very disturbed and, in a state of anxiety, weakness and with an air of defeat, asked if the Prophet had really said that. When Sa'd had confirmed that he had, Umayya fell into his arms and said, 'If he really did say that, then he spoke the truth.' The Prophet, peace be upon him, killed Umayya ibn Khalaf in the Battle of Badr.

This is even more clearly shown by the following example. When the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, announced his prophethood to the people of the Quraysh, he said

to them, "Is it not the case that if I were to inform you that there was an army of cavalry behind that hill preparing to attack you, you would believe me?" The response of the Quraysh to this question shows how they really viewed him as regards his honesty. They said: 'Yes, no one doubts your word amongst us. We have never known you to lie.'

Another image of the Prophet, peace be upon him

Another impression of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, that was not formed through careful thought and consideration, or by the use of logic, or by prolonged exposure to his company, was that developed by Umm Ma'bad al-Khuza'iyya – an impression that she made spontaneously, on the spur of the moment.

This view of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, does not deal with the Messenger's metaphysical characteristics, but it does paint for us a picture of his physical characteristics. We relate this here in order that people may have a clear idea of his outward form, as well as of his noble character, his greatness and his worth. The following picture is no more than a description, but it does speak volumes about how the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was perceived.

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, emigrated from Makka to Madina; Abu Bakr, his freedman 'Amir ibn Fuhayra, and their guide 'Abdullah ibn Urayqidh, may Allah be pleased with them, accompanied him. On their journey, they passed by the tent of Umm Ma'bad al-Khuza'iyya, a chaste woman of strong character, who would meet men, speak with them and show them hospitality. The riders asked her if she had any dates or meat which they could buy from her, but found that she had nothing as there had been a drought in the area. She said to them, "By Allah, if I had had anything, you would not have lacked for hospitality."

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, noticed an animal in the corner of the tent and said [to her], "What is this goat, Umm Ma'bad?"

"Exhaustion caused this goat to remain behind and not go out with the rest of the flock," she replied.

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asked her, "Does she have any milk?"

"She is too exhausted for that," she replied.

"Do I have your permission to milk her? He asked.

"I ransom you with my father and mother, yes, of course; if you think that she has any milk," she responded.

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, called for the goat, stroked its udder, mentioned Allah's name and said, "O Allah, give her blessing in her goat (i.e. increase its milk)." The goat's udder became full and its milk flowed copiously. He called for a large vessel and milked the goat until the vessel was completely full. Then he gave it to Umm Ma'bad, who drank until she was satiated, and to his Companions, who also drank their fill. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was the last one to drink and then said, "The one who serves the drink to others should be the last of all to drink."

They all drank time after time from the vessel and then he milked the goat again, filled the vessel again, left it with her and they went on their way. It was not long before Umm Ma'bad's husband returned, leading a flock of emaciated goats. When he saw the milk he was amazed and astounded and said to her, "Where did you get this milk, for there is no milk-bearing goat in this house?"

She said, "By Allah, [there was nothing] until a blessed man came by, who said such-and-such and such-and-such."

"By Allah," he said, "He must be the man the Quraysh are searching for. Describe him for me, Umm Ma'bad."

She said, "I saw a man of outward cleanliness with a shining face and good character. His figure was not marred by a plump stomach or a tiny head. He was handsome and well-proportioned, and had deep black eyes which were wide-set and had long eye-lashes. He had a soft and melodious voice and there was a beautiful contrast between the whiteness of his eyes and the blackness of his pupils. He had beautiful arched eyebrows, which met in the middle, and deep black hair. He had a well-formed neck, long and slender, and a thick beard. When he was silent he had an air of

dignity about him and when he spoke he was engulfed in splendour and brilliance – it was as if pearls issued from his mouth. He was neither taciturn nor talkative, rather his words were sweet and measured. From afar, he was the most beautiful of people, and the most handsome of them from nearby. He was of medium height, neither so tall that people would dislike him for it nor so short that people would belittle him. He was a branch between two other branches, the brightest of the three in aspect and the best of them in stature. He has companions who treat him with the utmost respect. Whenever he speaks they listen to his words and whenever he gives them an order, they rush to comply with it. He is a man who commands obedience and around whom people gather. He does not engage in idle joking, nor does he speak perverted words.”

Abu Ma‘bad said, “By Allah, that is the person of the Quraysh who has been mentioned to us. If I had been present when he was here, Umm Ma‘bad, I would have asked to accompany him; and I will do so if I can find a way to do it.”

This is the description of Umm Ma‘bad.

Another picture

‘Amr ibn al-‘As said, speaking with sincerity and candour, when he felt his death approaching, remembering the past and choking back the tears (and while speaking animatedly to his son about many different things), “There was no one who was more beloved to me or more exalted in my eyes than the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. I was unable to look at him fully on account of my respect for him. In fact, if you were to ask me to describe him I would be unable to do so, because I never fully looked at him.”

If this was how the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was seen in the past, then it is not without benefit that I mention an image of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, as described by a famous, equitable western man who was the author of the book, *Impressions et etudes*: Count Henry de Castries. The Count said, “In order prove the truthfulness of the Prophet Muhammad, we only need

to prove that he himself was certain about the truthfulness of his Message. The intention of his Message was to make his people replace their worship of idols, which they had been doing at the beginning of his Prophethood, with the worship of One God."

Because the spirit of this Prophet was created only to be satisfied by religion, his doctrine assumed its form in his ecstasy until it became a faith that no one before him had achieved. It was that firm creed that created an all-encompassing revolution in humankind.

Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, could neither read nor write, but was, as he describes himself many times, an unlettered Prophet. Not one of his contemporaries said anything to contradict this description. He did not read any book or seek guidance from any spiritual guide who had come before him.

We know that many hardships befell him and that he underwent great spiritual pains on account of the idolatry of his people. That was because Allah had created him with a spirit that was solely dedicated to religion. For that reason, he needed to isolate himself from people in order to escape from the doctrine of idolatry and the doctrine of polytheism. These two doctrines were like a thorn in the side of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and so, in order to be alone with his belief in the Unity of Allah, he withdrew to the cave of Hira.

It bewilders the intellect to consider how it is possible that those verses of the Qur'an could have emanated from an illiterate man. These were verses whose words and meanings were beyond the great thinkers of mankind to reproduce; verses which, when ibn Rabi'a heard them, astounded him with their beauty; verses which caused the eyes of the Negus to fill with tears when Ja'far ibn Abi Talib recited to him from *Surat Maryam* and from [the verses] that were revealed about Yahya, peace be upon him. The next day, the Negus instructed Ja'far ibn Abi Talib to recite to him the verses that had come down about 'Isa, peace be upon him, and so he did so. The king was astonished when he heard that 'Isa, peace be upon him, was the slave of Allah, His Messenger and a spirit from Him. He took hold of a thin stick that was in front of him and said to Ja'far, "The difference between that which we

have just heard from you and what our own religion says is no more than the thickness of this stick.”

I say that that stick was very strong and has prevented Ethiopia from entering into Islam, making it remain Christian until this day.

It is difficult for anyone to think that mere human eloquence could produce such an effect – and how could it, when the eloquence of the Qur'an has no weaknesses.

Muhammad brought the Qur'an, a proof of the truthfulness of his Message. This Qur'an remains to this day one of those secrets whose mysteries no one has been able to unravel. Indeed, it is not possible for anyone to comprehend its secrets unless that person first believes that it consists of Words that have been sent down by Allah, regardless of whether that leads us to knowledge of the true nature of revelation or not.

No one rejects the fact that the phenomenon of Muhammad was a prophetic one, because prophethood, by definition, is the act of a man chosen from his people, and believing that what he brought is truly from his Lord, carrying out the commands of his Lord. Muhammad believed that a spirit from his Lord had taken control of his heart and intellect. He did not believe that he had peculiar or special ideas, but that those verses were given to him by Allah and hidden in his inner being.

It is also difficult for us to know how he could have heard the Divine Voice – did it come to him in his dreams or when he was disconnected from the world of forms?

His truthfulness was a fact in any case

The affects of revelation would appear quite plainly on the Prophet's face so that the idolators who saw him in such a state thought that he was possessed by jinn. That perception of theirs was faulty, however, because his Mission began after he had reached forty years of age, and before that time he had not been seen to have any physical or mental defect, or to have had any financial difficulty.

In addition to this, there is no other man in history about whose life more is known. Every moment and state of the Prophet

Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was recorded by his Companions, even to the extent that they would count the number of white hairs in his beard. If he had been mentally or physically ill, it is impossible that we would not have known about it; and he would not have had the spectacular effect on the history of mankind that he did. When the Prophet was in one of his agitated states, it was not caused by jinn.

Muhammad was neither an innovator nor a false prophet

Yes, we do see similarities between some parts of the Torah and some parts of the Qur'an, but it is easy to see why. It is not odd for parts of these divinely-revealed Books to be alike, especially if we first bear in mind that the Qur'an came in order to complete what had come before, just as the Prophet was sent as the Seal of the Prophets; and that the spirit of the Prophet was affected by the same Source that had affected the spirits of the prophets of the tribe of Israel, for he worshipped the same God that they worshipped.

Muhammad did not have any attachment to the baubles of this world. He was neither arrogant nor miserly, but would milk his own goats and sit in the dust. He was also frugal. At the time that he departed from this world he had not once eaten his fill from barley bread, nor had he had a retinue. He never took a vizier for himself nor did he have servants. He attached no importance to wealth even though he had obtained the greatest level of sovereignty that a man could reach. He did not have anything to indicate kingship except for his wooden staff.

Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, came and spent his life destroying idolatry with unwavering resolve: he did not once hesitate in calling people to the worship of One God and abandoning idolatry. His life was governed by his faith – his enthusiasm for his *deen* never flagged. He finished just as he had started. Throughout his life he never once desired wealth. In fact, on every occasion that money came to him, he gave it as *sadaqa* to those who needed it.

On one occasion, he gave his wife 'A'isha money to look after for him. When the time of his death was at hand he ordered her to give it to the poor and destitute without delay. After it had been distributed amongst them he said, "Now my heart can be at rest. I had feared that I would go to meet my Lord while in possession of that money."

He once delivered a sermon to his community, saying, "O you how can hear my words, if I ever hit any of you on the back, then here is my back for you to hit. If I ever sullied the reputation of any person amongst you, then let him take his revenge on my reputation. If I ever stole any money from any of you, then here is my money and he is at liberty to be angry with me, for it is impossible for there to be rancour in my heart."

Shaykh ad-Dajwi, in citing the above-mentioned quotation from de Castries in the Azhar magazine, said in conclusion, "Thus spoke this great righteous man."

After mentioning some of the opinions of the Orientalists of the present age, we would now like to quote the words of Dr Zaki Mubarak. He has summarised the miraculous nature of the Qur'an in the following remarkable words:

"What better time could one spend than in the intimate company of those spiritual firebrands which were scattered throughout existence by the Prophet of Islam? That irresistible spirit is the spirit of a man whose contemporaries accused him of being a poet, magician and madman. That spirit is an eternal torch that will be, as long as the heavens and earth endure, something that charms and wins over hearts and minds.

A time will come when people will have doubts about the Prophet's position in history, and a group of people will say, "The qualities that are claimed for that man are so amazing and of such great consequence that it is impossible that he could have existed." They will claim that he was nothing more than a symbolic mythical figure that people have taken as an example, for how could anyone have such perfect good character?

By Allah, those people will say that, but we will say this before them: we will affirm his character, while acknowledging the fact that he had truly borne witness to this existence. For what is so strange about the fact that Allah should create men who exemplify

spiritual greatness, and who remain examples for the rest of us despite the passing of the eons?

From amongst all the prophets and messengers, the Prophet Muhammad was allotted the greatest portion. Myths have arisen regarding the person of every other Prophet, and descriptions of their qualities have entered into the realms of imagination and fantasy. This is not the case with the Prophet Muhammad, for the strongest proof of who he was remains to this day – that is to say, the Qur'an, a book which has not had a single myth or story added to it since the death of the Messenger. It is an unparalleled historical document.

But to whom do we direct this response? Do you see anyone defending that glorious Book? Who could the enemies of that Book be? Are atheists anything more than foolish people whose dreams [and ideas] are constantly changing and who think there is deviation on account of the veils placed over stupidity and ignorance?

It is an astonishing thing that some of those who are enemies of the Qur'an are at the same time great admirers of the poetry of Abu Nuwas, and see it as being good enough to be measured against the works of the greatest poets of ancient Greece. What is the poetry of Abu Nuwas, in its entirety, when compared with a single verse of the Qur'an that will remain a marvel of clarity for all time?

By Allah, I do not know how anyone who spouts this sort of nonsense could be considered have a brain – it is as if stupidity has become a sign of superiority in this shameless age! The enemies of the Qur'an do not oppose the Qur'an on any rational grounds, for how could a person be rational if he opposes the resplendent full moon or a firmly-rooted mountain? These are merely whims and caprices that fly around the heads of those cowardly and crazy people who are the illusion that Islam no longer has an Aws or a Khazraj and that no angry lion remains in the valley. How wrong they are!

Despite that, the atheists will go away even – if the memory of them will remain. They will be no more than a second-hand copy of Iblis. If they offer the excuse that fame is a glorious prize, then they should remember the fact that Iblis is and will always be

more famous than them, even if they spend their whole lives in the service of misguidance and falsehood.

The fools among the people will ask, "Why say these things in the introduction to a book of prophetic praises?"

We reply that we are trying to describe a symptom of the time in which we live. We do not create imaginary enemies in order to fight them. The enemies are very real – we have borne witness to them with our own eyes. By Allah, they are too contemptible for us to waste energy criticising or blaming them. However, their baseness does not prevent us from ridiculing or taunting them, for even in days of old the tongues of the believers damned the accursed Shaytan.

Why should combating lying and false witness be forbidden?

Leaving wrongdoers to their own devices and not putting a stop to them is a type of cowardice. It allows sparrows to become like hawks and permits those wrongdoers to form parties of like-thinking people.

It is absolutely incredible that in Egypt, a land of wonders, earnest concern about historical remains is alive and well, whereas concern about real matters has died. If a stone were to be stolen from Karnak, it would be considered a national calamity, and anyone who can cry or wail well is rewarded for screaming about its loss.

As for the upheaval of faith in this country, that is considered to be of less importance than the collapse of an archaeological stone protected by the Ministry of Public Works, because the preservation of archaeological sites is a modern innovation introduced by the Europeans and Americans. As for the preservation of theological beliefs, that is an ancient custom that has gradually been forgotten as time has passed.

I do not say this on account of religious extremism (even though that is a noble extremism to have); but I do say it out of fanaticism for ethical truth, and ethical truth is something that all civilised men aspire to. Culture is not learning all the delusions and fanciful ideas of the east and west, but it is getting to know that which is necessary to know. The time has come for the heedless to understand that a community whose children are protected

by the Qur'an will be better guided than a community whose children are protected by the stories of the weak-minded.

And I am not the only one to point out the reality of the situation. In fact there are many people who recognise this, but they do not speak out because they are too afraid of being labelled as bigoted and backward-looking. I personally, however, attach no weight or importance to this label, because the party of Shaytan is too weak to be taken into account or taken seriously."

These words are not meant to offend non-Muslim readers, as the Qur'an is not the personal property of Muslims but belongs to humanity in its entirety.

Now, we need to ask ourselves what picture we want to paint in this book. We want to present a picture of the Prophet that has a sound basis in history, not one that we have ourselves made up. However, we must stress that we are unable to provide a complete picture. We can only mention as many aspects of his life as we can, being aware the whole time of our incapacity to do justice to the subject. However, we do have high hopes that this picture will be the means of correcting certain writings and will serve to depict some of the love and faith that we hold in our hearts for the master of the sons of Adam. We also desire that this book should serve as something that will intercede with Allah for us on "*the Day when neither wealth nor sons will be of any use except to those who come to Allah with sound hearts.*" (26:88-89)

When discussing the various aspects [of the character and life of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, the words of Imam al-Busayri, may Allah be pleased with him, has never been far from our minds. He said in his *Burda*:

*"His perfect inner nature made people unable
to comprehend, so it was not understood
By those near or far, except according
to their helpless, imperfect understanding.
As the sun is seen by the eyes from afar:
Truly small, yet dazzles the eye when you stare at it.
And how can his reality be grasped in this world?"*

*A sleeping nation whose descriptions of him
are (like interpretations of) a dream.
So the limit of our knowledge about him
is that he is a man.
And verily he is the best of all Allah's creation."*

Chapter 2

The Proofs of Prophethood in his Lineage

Ibn Khaldun says in his discussion on the signs by which Prophets may be recognised:

“Another sign by which they may be recognized is the fact that they have prestige and lineage among their people. We read in the *Sahih* Collections: ‘Allah did not send a Prophet without putting him in a position of strength among his people.’ (Another variant has: ‘...in a position of wealth among his people.’) According to what may be found in the *Sahih* Collections, when Heraclius asked about the standing of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, within the Quraysh, Abu Sufyan replied that he had prestige (in another variant, he mentioned his noble lineage) among them. Whereupon Heraclius said, “Whenever messengers are sent, they have prestige and noble lineage among their people.”

What is meant by this prestige is that he has enough group support and influence to protect him from harm at the hands of the unbelievers, and to permit him to complete his mission, deliver the messages of his Lord, and complete the *deen* [for his people] in the manner that Allah intended for him.

In discussing the noble lineage of the immediate ancestors of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, we must begin with Qusayy ibn Kilab.

Qusayy ibn Kilab

Qusayy, as Ibn Kathir tells us, was a man who was a master over his people and possessed authority amongst them. They

respected and obeyed him. The Quraysh had been scattered throughout the Arabian Peninsula and he brought them back together. He sought help from all those Arabs who owed him obedience in his war against Khuza'a and his attempt to drive them away from the House and bring it into his possession. The fighting continued for a long time between Qusayy and Khuza'a, and much blood was spilt. Then they mutually called for arbitration and sued for peace. They appointed Ya'mar ibn 'Awf ibn Ka'b ibn 'Amir ibn Layth ibn Bakr ibn 'Abd Manat ibn Kinana as the arbitrator, and he ruled that Qusayy's claim to the House was stronger than that of Khuza'a. He also declared that the blood spilt by Qusayy was lawful and that Khuza'a and Banu Bakr had to pay blood money for every person they had killed or injured from the tribes of the Quraysh, Kinana and Quda'a and clear the way for them to enter Makka and approach the Ka'ba.

It is related on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas that Qusayy ibn Kilab was the first of the descendants of Ka'b ibn Lu'ayy to assume kingship, and that his people gave allegiance to him. He was the undisputed Sharif of Makka. Then he built the Council Chamber (*Dar an-Nadwa*) and constructed it so that its door faced the Ka'ba. The Quraysh discussed all of their affairs, such as marriages, war and diplomacy, within its walls, and even minor matters, such as when a woman reached puberty and ritually changed her dress. Her dress was cut there and then she was sent to her family. The banner of war, regardless of whether it was an offensive or defensive war, was only ever raised in the Council Chamber, and it was Qusayy himself who raised it. No boy was circumcised except in the Council Chamber and no caravan of the Quraysh set out on its journey except from its doors or returned except that it unloaded in front of its doors. This was done as a mark of respect to him and with the hope of gaining good luck by seeing him, for they knew his excellence. They followed his orders religiously and did nothing without his permission, both during his life and after his death. He combined the offices of custodianship of the Ka'ba, watering the pilgrims, feeding the pilgrims, raising the banner of war, and chairing the Council and the governance of Makka in person. He would also take a tithe of one-tenth from every non-resident to enter Makka.

According to Ibn Sa'd; 'It was called *Dar an-Nadwa* (Council Chamber) because the Quraysh used to assemble there when either good or bad things befell them. In the Arabic language '*nadiyy*' is the place where people meet.'

Qusayy divided Makka into quarters and allotted each quarter to a separate branch of the Quraysh. As the number of its inhabitants grew, Makka became too cramped to house them all. There were many trees in the Haram, which the Quraysh saw as being sacred and feared to cut down. Qusayy ordered them to cut them down, telling them, 'You are only cutting them down for your houses and projects. May Allah curse anyone who does so desiring corruption.' Qusayy cut down a tree with his own hands and his supporters followed suit. Only then did the Quraysh begin to cut them down. They awarded him the title of 'Unifier' because it was on his orders that the unity of Quraysh was achieved, and they saw him and his command as being that which would bring them good fortune.

Qusayy made it obligatory for the Quraysh to fulfil the offices of watering and feeding the pilgrims. He said to them, 'Tribe of Quraysh, you are the neighbours of Allah, the inhabitants of His House and the inhabitants of the *Haram*; and the pilgrims are the guests of Allah, the visitors to His House and are guests most deserving of honour. Therefore provide them with food and drink during the days of the pilgrimage and continue to do so until they return to their homes.' They did what he said and allotted a portion of their wealth to fulfil these offices every year. They paid this portion to him and he used it to provide food for the people during the days of Mina and while they were in Makka, and to construct leather basins which were filled with water for the pilgrims in Makka, Mina and 'Arafa. This practice continued from his time until the advent of Islam; and then has continued from the advent of Islam until the present day.

When Qusayy died, his daughter, Takhmur bint Qusayy, recited an elegy for him, saying:

'After the sleep of those who stay up at night,
the announcer came in the night,

and announced the death
of generous and masterful Qusayy.
'He announced the death
of the most refined descendant of Lu'ayy,
causing my tears to fall like single pearls.
'My sadness and internal grief brought upon me
a sleeplessness like that suffered
by one who has been stung [by a scorpion].'
(*Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd*)

'Abd Manaf ibn Qusayy

Ibn Sa'd says, relating from Hisham ibn Muhammad, "When Qusayy ibn Kilab died, leadership of the Quraysh passed on to 'Abd Manaf ibn Qusayy.

One of the things mentioned with regard to the family of 'Abd Manaf is that when Allah revealed the verse: "*Warn your near relatives*" (26:213), the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, confined his warning to the descendants of 'Abd Manaf. When this noble verse was revealed and the descendants of 'Abd Manaf had gathered together in response to his call, he said to them, has commanded me to warn my closest relatives, and it is you who hold the closest kinship to me within the Quraysh. I am not able to get Allah to show you any preferential treatment, nor am I able to promise you a share of the Garden in the Next World unless you bear witness that there is no God but Allah. Then I will bear witness for you before your Lord and the Arabs will take their *deen* from you and the non-Arabs will humble themselves before you." (taken from *Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd*)

Hashim ibn 'Abd Manaf

'Abd Manaf begot six sons and six daughters, one of whom was Hashim ibn 'Abd Manaf, whose given name was 'Amr. It was he the one who concluded a pact with Heraclius on behalf of the Quraysh, giving them the right to visit Syria in safety and peace. The verse that mentions 'the established tradition of Quraysh' refers back to Hashim, for it was he who established the two jour-

neys of the Quraysh. The first journey was in the winter, when the caravans travelled to Yemen, and to Abyssinia and its ruler, the Negus, who would honour them and shower them with presents. The other journey was in the summer, when the caravans travelled to Syria and Gaza and sometimes went as far as Ankara. They were admitted into the presence of the Byzantine Emperor, who would honour them and shower them with gifts.

One time, a famine befell the Quraysh which lasted for several years and completely destroyed their livestock and livelihoods. Therefore, Hashim set out for Syria and returned with a large amount of grain and flour loaded on the backs of camels. He had the flour made into bread in Makka, broke the loaves of bread into small pieces and soaked them in meat broth. Then he slaughtered the camels and ordered them to be cooked. After they had been cooked, he gave the food to the people of Makka and they ate their fill. This represented to them life-giving rain after the drought that had afflicted them and for that reason they called him Hashim ('he who breaks up bread and soaks it in broth'). 'Abdullah ibn az-Ziba'ra said about this:

'Lofty 'Amr broke the *tharid* [bread soaked in broth]
for his people,
when the people of Makkah were suffering from famine
and had become emaciated.'

Hashim was a noble man who was both ambitious and astute. He did not like the fact that the Banu 'Abdu'd-Dar had come to hold a monopoly on all of the offices of honour in Makka, such as the custodianship of the Ka'ba, the raising of the banner of war, the feeding of the pilgrims, the watering of the pilgrims and the chairing of the Council. He raised the banner of war against Banu 'Abdu'd-Dar and the two factions made alliances and prepared for battle, tribe after tribe mobilising for war. Then, before full-blown hostilities had broken out, people intervened in an attempt to bring about peace. They agreed terms on the basis that the offices of feeding and watering the pilgrims should be handed over to Hashim ibn 'Abd Manaf [and his descendants].

Hashim was a very wealthy man. Whenever the time of the pilgrimage approached he would stand up amongst the Quraysh and say to them, "Tribe of Quraysh, you are the neighbours of Allah and the inhabitants of His House. The visitors of Allah will come to you during this festival in order to honour His House. They are the guests of Allah and it is His guests who are most worthy of your generosity. Allah has singled you out for this task and honoured you by entrusting you with it, and has protected you better than any neighbour has ever done; so honour His guests and His visitors."

Hashim had leather basins made, placed near the well of Zamzam (the well of Zamzam was dry at that time, for it had not yet been rediscovered) and filled with water from the other wells of Makka so that the pilgrims could drink from them. He commenced feeding the pilgrims on the day before the Day of *Tarwiyah* (8 Dhu'l-Hijja) at Makka and then at Mina, and then on the Day of *Jam'* at 'Arafa. He would soak the bread in meat broth and clarified butter and cook the meat for them, and prepare *sawiq* (guel of barley and dates) and give them dates. He would carry water to them in large leather cisterns on the day of Mina when water was scarce. Once the people had left Mina, the duty of hospitality was discharged and people returned to their homelands.

In order to complete the picture of Hashim, we now relate a summary of that which al-Mawardi said in his book *A'lam an-Nubuwwa*:

"His name was 'Amr, but he was called Hashim because he was the first to break up bread and soak it in broth so that the people of Makka could eat. In a year of drought, he made a trip to Palestine, purchased some flour and returned with it to Makka, where he made it into bread, slaughtered his camels and made *tharid* (bread soaked in broth) which he gave to the people of Makka.

"Hashim was the first to establish the two journeys of the Quraysh, the winter journey and the summer journey, as we mentioned before. Umayya ibn 'Abd Shams wanted to imitate Hashim in his hospitality but was unable to do so, so many of the people of Quraysh began to taunt him. This caused a situation of enmity to

break out between Umayya and Hashim, leading Umayya to challenge Hashim to *munafara* (the verdict of a trustworthy man as to who was the superior of the two men). Hashim did not want to accept on account of his noble lineage and standing. But the Quraysh did not let him be; they forced him to go and obtain the verdict of the soothsayer of Khuza'a, on the condition that the loser would give the winner fifty black-eyed camels to be slaughtered in the valley of Makka, and would leave Makka and go into exile for a period of ten years. The soothsayer of Khuza'a declared Hashim to be superior and asked Umayya, 'How can you challenge a man to *munafara* who is taller, older, more handsome and has fewer faults than you and who has more sons and a larger family?' Umayya replied, 'It is a sign of the falseness of these times that we had you as referee.'

"Hashim took possession of the camels, slaughtered them and fed everyone who was present. Umayya went to Syria, where he remained for the next ten years. This was the first outbreak of enmity between Hashim and Umayya.

"Hashim took possession of the offices of feeding and watering the pilgrims, and became leader of the Quraysh. The people took his words as commands, and when he gave his opinion they acted upon it. On one occasion, the tribes of Quraysh and Khuza'a came to a disagreement and approached him in order for him to judge which of them was in the right. He addressed them on condition that both factions obey his decree. He told them in his address: 'Men, we are all descendents of Ibrahim and of his son Isma'il. We are the sons of an-Nadr ibn Kinana and Qusayy ibn Kilab. We are the lords of Makka and the inhabitants of the *Haram*. We possess in them the summit of prestige and the source of nobility and honour. It is incumbent upon every one of us to help the others and respond to their call for aid, except when that entails acting disobediently to one's forebears or breaking the ties of kinship.

"Sons of Qusayy, you are like two branches of a single tree: whenever one breaks, the other feels desolate and alone. A sword is only protected and looked after by its scabbard. He who fires an arrow at his close family hits nobody but himself. He who lets argument and obstinacy govern his life is led to tyranny.

“People, forbearance is honour, patience is victory, beneficence is a treasure, generosity is sovereignty, ignorance is stupidity and the times are in constant change. A man is referred to by his actions, and taken to task by his works. So if you do what is right, you will reap the praise for that; if you leave aside meddlesome behaviour, the foolish will avoid your company; if you treat the one who sits with you generously, your assemblies will become full; if you defend your associate, he will want to become your neighbour; and if you treat each other justly and honestly, people will trust you. You must take on the qualities of good character, for they will raise you up; and you must beware of the qualities of bad character, for they will take away your nobility and destroy your honour. Know that preventing an ignorant person from committing a crime is less troublesome than his doing so. The head of a family carries its burdens and the forbearing person acts as a warning for the one who wants to benefit by him.’

“The Quraysh said to him, ‘We are happy with you, Abu Nadla (this was Hashim’s *kunya*).’

“Look at his speech and you will see that he ordered his people to embody the qualities of noble character and forbade them to do bad actions. A speech like this could only have sprung forth from a person of surpassing excellence, majestic standing and high aspiration. He only possessed these qualities because he had been destined to be like that; for it is well known that if a man possesses certain qualities, those qualities are sure to pass to his descendants.

“Hashim died at Gaza in Sham.” (al-Mawardi)

‘Abdu’l-Muttalib

Hashim ibn ‘Abd Manaf had four sons, one of whom was Shaybat al-Hamd. He was known as ‘Abdu’l-Muttalib and was born in Madina, not in Makka. The reason for this was that Hashim set out from Makka with a caravan of the Quraysh in which were gathered their goods for trade. Their route passed by Madina and they stopped at the an-Nabt market, during the time of its yearly market which brought people in from far and wide. The Quraysh bought and sold commodities. There they noticed a woman standing in an elevated part of the market ordering that

things be bought and sold on her behalf. This woman appeared to Hashim to be astute, steadfast and beautiful, and so he inquired about her to find out if she was a spinster or a married woman. He was informed that she had been married to Uhayha ibn al-Julah and had borne him two sons, 'Umar and Ma'bad. Then he had divorced her. After that she would not marry any man – on account of her high position amongst her people – unless they granted her the precondition in her marriage contract that she had the right to leave her husband if she disliked him. Her name was Salma bint 'Amr ibn Zayd ibn Labid ibn Khidash ibn 'Amir ibn Ghanim ibn 'Adi ibn an-Najjar. Hashim asked for her hand in marriage and, knowing his noble status and fine lineage, she married herself to him. He consummated the marriage and prepared a feast to which he invited the forty or so men of the Quraysh who had accompanied him on the caravan and who were among the descendants of 'Abd Manaf, Makhzum and Sahm. He also invited a few men from the tribe of Khazraj. He and his companions remained with her for some time and Salma became pregnant with 'Abdu'l-Muttalib. When he was born he had some grey hair on his head and so was named Shayba.

From there, Hashim set out with his companions and continued his trade journey through Syria and as far as Gaza, where he fell ill. His companions stayed with him until he died of his illness, buried him in Gaza, and returned with his legacy to his children.

Thabit ibn al-Mundhir ibn Haram (the father of the poet Hassan ibn Thabit) once came to Makka to perform *'umra* and visited al-Muttalib, who was a close friend of his. He said to him, "If you had seen your nephew Shayba, who is at this moment living amongst us, you would have seen a boy who combines in his person the qualities of beauty, veneration and nobility. I have seen him competing in archery competitions with some of his younger maternal uncles and fire his two arrows into an area the size of the palm of my hand. Every time his arrow hit the target he would say, 'I am the son of the exalted 'Amr.'"

Hearing this, al-Muttalib said, "I will not let a single evening pass. I will go to him immediately and bring him back with me." Thabit replied, "I do not think that Salma and her maternal uncles will hand him over to you, for they guard him most jealously.

What you should do is leave him under their guardianship until he grows up and comes to you of his own accord."

"Abu Aws, I could not possibly leave him there and let him know nothing of the glorious deeds of his people and noble lineage and give up his rightful position. You know the noble status that he enjoys amongst his people," replied al-Muttalib. Al-Muttalib set out, arrived in Madina, took up quarters in a district of the city and began to make inquiries about his nephew, until at last he found him shooting arrows with some of his younger maternal uncles. The moment that he first saw him, he recognised him immediately on account of his resemblance to his father, and his eyes overflowed with tears. He embraced him and clothed him in a Yemeni garment.

Then Salma sent a messenger to al-Muttalib to invite him to come and stay with her. He said, "I do not plan to remain here for sp long. I will not unpack my belongings or settle here for any period of time until I have first taken my nephew into my care and returned him to his rightful land and people." She replied, "I shall not release him from my care," and was very rude to him. Thereupon al-Muttalib replied, "Desist. I am not going anywhere and will not return home unless my nephew goes with me; he has reached the age of puberty and yet he is still a stranger amongst his own people. We belong to a most noble family. It is better for him to live with us in his homeland rather than remain here. He will always be your son, no matter where he lives. When she finally realised that he would not rest until he had taken her son with him, she asked him to give her a respite of three days. He agreed, and moved from his quarters to their house and stayed with them for those three days. Then he took Shayba and travelled with him to Makka. 'Abdu'l-Muttalib entered Makka in the company of his uncle al-Muttalib in the afternoon, and when the Quraysh saw him they said, "This must be the slave of al-Muttalib." Al-Muttalib said to them, "Woe to you! This is none other than my brother Hashim's son, Shayba ibn 'Amr." When they saw him more closely they said, "By my life, it is 'Amr's son."

'Abdu'l-Muttalib stayed in Makka until he reached the age of reason. During that time, al-Muttalib ibn 'Abd Manaf set out on a trading trip to Yemen, where he died in a city called Radman.

After his death, 'Abdu'l-Muttalib succeeded him and took over the offices of feeding and watering the pilgrims and those offices remained his exclusive right. He would feed the pilgrims in Makka and serve them water in leather cisterns. That continued until the well of Zamzam was rediscovered and the use of cisterns was discontinued within Makka and the pilgrims were watered exclusively from the well of Zamzam. It was 'Abdu'l-Muttalib who rediscovered and unblocked the well. He would carry water from Zamzam to the pilgrims standing on 'Arafat in order to provide them with water. (*Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd*)

The well of Zamzam was a spring granted by Allah. Allah sent 'Abdu'l-Muttalib certain signs in his sleep on more than one occasion. He ordered him to dig in the place described to him. Allah said to him, "Dig *tayba*." 'Abdu'l-Muttalib asked, "What is *tayba*?" The next night He came to him and ordered him to dig *barra*. "And what is *barra*?" asked 'Abdu'l-Muttalib. The next night He came to him again (while 'Abdu'l-Muttalib was sleeping in the same spot) and ordered him to dig *al-madnuna*. 'Abdu'l-Muttalib said, "What is *al-madnuna*? Can you please explain what you mean?"

When the next night arrived He came to him again and told him to dig Zamzam. "What is Zamzam?" he asked. He said, "It will never run dry and will never drain away. It will water the pilgrims. It is situated between dung and blood, at a place where a white-footed crow pecks."

Now that the spot in which the well was located had been earmarked, he set out the next morning with a pickaxe and shovel in the company of his son al-Harith. They dug until they struck water. That water was Zamzam.

'Abdu'l-Muttalib was one of the wisest of all the Arabs and was one of the rulers of the Quraysh. Some of the laws confirmed by the Qur'an were originally enacted by him: laws such as forbidding marriage between close members of the same family, cutting off the hands of thieves and forbidding killing young girls by burying them alive. Historians describe 'Abdu'l-Muttalib in the following way: "He was the most handsome of the Quraysh and the tallest man of them. He was the most forbearing and generous man in the whole of the Quraysh and abstained from all those

things that mar the characters of men. No king saw him without being moved to honour him and seek his mediation and advice. He was the absolute master of the Quraysh until he died.” (*Tabaqat Ibn Sa’d*)

‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abdi’l-Muttalib

As for ‘Abdullah, the father of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, he was a mirror image of his grandfather; and if he had lived longer he would have succeeded his father, ‘Abdu’l-Muttalib, and would have inherited the offices of nobility from him. The code by which he lived his life could be described in the following phrase, “It is better to die than to do anything unlawful.”

Fatima al-Khath‘amiyya said to him, “I see in your face the pious nature of your father’s.”

When we look at the father and ancestors of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and at his mother and maternal uncles, we will notice that they are from among the greatest, most noble and most generous tribes of the Arabs – and this is something that all historians attest to. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was, as Ibn Hisham says, “He was the best of his people in lineage, and the one whose father and mother brought him the greatest nobility.”

Imam al-Busayri, may Allah be pleased with him, said in his *Hamziyya*:

“You continue to be at the very core of existence –
your mothers and fathers are chosen for you.”

And he also says, in his *Burda*:

“His birth made manifest the goodness of his essence.
O the goodness of his beginning and his end!”

Abu Hurayra related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “I was sent from the best generations of the sons of Adam, generation after generation, until I was born into the generation that I was born in.” (al-Bukhari)

The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Allah chose Isma'il from amongst the sons of Ibrahim and then chose Ibn Kinana from the sons of Isma'il and Quraysh from the sons of Ibn Kinana. He chose Banu Hashim from the sons of Quraysh and chose me from amongst the tribe of Banu Hashim." (Muslim)

Abu Hurayra related that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said, "I am the master of the sons of Adam."

Hudhayfa related that Mudar told him, "You have among you the master of the sons of Adam." He was referring to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

All of these traditions that show the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was the best of creation, are sound: both those concerned with his noble lineage and those that mention his noble status and position. We will see this more clearly in the chapters that follow.

He is, may Allah bless him and grant him peace: Muhammad ibn 'Abdillah ibn 'Abdi'l-Muttalib ibn Hashim ibn 'Abd Manaf ibn Qusayy.

In order to bring this chapter to a satisfactory conclusion, we would like to cite the following remarkable quotation, mentioned in the book *A'lam an-nubuwwa*. These words were inspired and contained deep wisdom and served well to show how this amazing noble lineage culminated in the person of the Chosen Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

"There was neither a brother or a sister to share his parents with him, on account of the perfection of their purity and so that their noble lineage would be restricted to the person of the Prophet. Thus he alone would possess that noble lineage that Allah made come to pass, so that it would culminate in his Prophethood and would be a sign [of his status]. This would have been lessened or might have vanished if there had been anyone together with him to share in that lineage. Hence both his parents died when he was still very young. As for his father, 'Abdullah, he died whilst the Prophet was still in his mother's womb, and as for his mother Amina, she died when he was only six years old." (Abu'l-Hasan al-Mawardi, *A'lam an-nubuwwa*)

Chapter 3

The Proofs of Prophethood in the character of the Prophet, peace be upon him, before the start of his mission

The splitting of his breast

This incident took place for the first time while the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was still a very young child. At that time he was staying with the Bedouin tribe of Banu Sa'd with his wet-nurse. One day, while he was playing with a few other boys, Jibril came to him, took hold of him and laid him on his back. Then he opened up his breast, took out his heart and removed a clot of blood from it. Then he said, "This is the portion of you that belonged to Shaytan." Then he washed his heart with the water of Zamzam in a golden bowl, replaced it, re-healed his chest and sent him back to the place from which he had taken him]. The other boys ran back to his mother – meaning his wet-nurse – and told her that Muhammad had been killed. He returned with his face pale and they received him into their home. This happened when he was approximately four years old. (Muslim)

Ubayy ibn Ka'b related that Abu Hurayra was a person who had been bold enough to ask the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, about matters that nobody else was prepared to ask him. On one occasion he asked him, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, "Messenger of Allah, what was the first thing you saw to indicate your Prophethood?" The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, sat upright and said, "You have asked, Abu Hurayra. I was out in the desert when I was about ten years old when all of a sudden I heard someone speaking above my head. I looked up and saw one man speaking to another. He asked, "Is that him?" The other one replied, "Yes, it is."

He said: "They turned to face me and their faces were unlike anything I had ever seen. I had never experienced beings like them and I had never seen anyone wearing clothes the like of theirs. They walked towards me and each one of them took hold of one of my upper arms without uttering a single sound. Then one of them said to the other, 'Lay him down on his back.' They laid me down without using force or pulling my head and body back and then one told the other, 'Split open his breast.'

"One of them swooped down onto my breast and split it open, and this happened as far as I could see without any blood being spilt and without any pain. He said to his companion, 'Put compassion and mercy into his heart.' What he inserted into my breast resembled silver. Then he shook the big toe on my right foot and said to me, 'Go home and be safe and unharmed.' I returned home and from that moment I had compassion and gentleness for the young and mercy for the old." (Ahmad, Ibn Hibban, al-Hakim and Ibn 'Asakir)

When the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, reached the age of fifty, his breast was split open [again] on the night of the Night Journey and the Ascension.

Ubayy ibn Ka'b relates that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "The roof of my house opened up while I was in Makka and Jibril descended upon me, opened up my breast and washed it out with water. Then he brought forth a golden bowl filled with wisdom and faith, poured into my breast and then resealed it." (Ahmad and Muslim)

It is not our desire here to enter into a discussion with materialists or to argue with them about the logistics of how his breast was split, for this is an exalted and heavenly matter; and arguments about the exact way in which it happened, or the precise time and place, demean it. Such argumentation is a sign of weak faith, not a sign of enlightened certainty.

Both the *hadith* collections and the books of *sira* relate the occurrence of this event with sound chains of transmission. This event is one which demonstrates the fact that Allah took care of His Messenger, even in his early childhood, because He removed the portion of Shaytan from the heart of His Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, when he was only a small

boy, and thus made it so that Shaytan would never have any influence over him.

Allah, although He had willed it that Muhammad should be the Seal of the Prophets from before creation, wanted to make him the absolute example of human perfection. A human being begins his journey towards perfection by purifying his heart, cleansing his soul, making repentance and acting with absolute sincerity – or, to put it in another way, by splitting open his breast and removing the portion of Shaytan from his heart. Allah, glory be to Him, sent His angels to split open his breast and remove the portion of Shaytan from his heart, and later sent them to split open his breast and fill his heart with tranquillity. Jibril removed the portion of Shaytan from the heart of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, when he was very young and so the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was, as Amina said, someone over whom Shaytan had no influence. And this is a fact: Shaytan had no influence over him, because Allah gave him absolute immunity from impurity and from doing wrong during his entire life.

The Messenger and the life of leisure in Makka

When the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was a young man, the city of Makka was a hotbed of dubious pleasures and lewd appetites: wine bars and houses of ill repute were to be found on almost every street. These places were inhabited by singers, dancers and brazen hussies. Young men would devote their time and energy to partaking in these activities and would call on one another to frequent these places. Allah wanted His Messenger to be far removed from such places and activities, and emptied his heart of any desire to join in with the other young men.

Al-Bukhari mentioned that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “I never even had the intention to embark on any of the things that people would do in the time of the *Jabiliyya* except on two occasions.”

‘Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, spoke about these two occasions. He said, “I heard the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, say, “I never set my mind to doing any of the things that people in the time of the *Jahiliyya* concerned themselves with, except on two different nights. On both occasions, Allah protected me from doing them. On one of the two nights, I said to one of the young men of Makka, while we were herding sheep for some of its inhabitants, “Can you watch the flock for me so that I can go into Makka and have a night out like the other young men do?” He replied that he would, so I went in towards Makka until I reached its outlying houses. Thereupon I heard the sound of tambourines and flutes being played. I asked the inhabitants of the outlying houses what the music was for. They replied that so-and-so was getting married to so-and-so. I sat down to watch and Allah caused me to fall asleep. By Allah, I did not wake up until I felt the touch of the sun on my face. I returned to my companion and he asked me what I had done. I replied that I had not done anything and then informed him of what I had seen.

“Then on a different night, I again said to him, “Watch the flock for me so that I may go for a night out on the town.” He agreed to do so and I again went in towards the city. When I came to the edge of Makka, I heard the same sound that I had heard the previous night and again asked about it. I was told that so-and-so was marrying so-and-so and so again sat down to watch. Allah caused me to fall asleep again and, by Allah, I did not wake up until I felt the heat of the sun. I returned to my companion and he asked me what I had done. I told him that I had not done anything and then told him what had happened. After that, from that moment right up until the time Allah honoured me with prophethood, I never again made an intention to do any of that and never returned [to the city with that intention].” (Ibn Kathir)

This was his position concerning the frivolous amusements enjoyed by the young men of the *Jahiliyya*.

Worshipping Idols

As for the matter of worshipping idols, the following clarifies the position of the Prophet regarding that when he was but a young man. Ibn ‘Abbas, may Allah be pleased with them both, related that Umm Ayman said, “Buwana was an idol that the Quraysh used to come to in order to honour it: they would carry out rituals, shave their heads and seclude themselves for an entire day in the presence of this idol. This would take place once a year. Abu Talib used to attend the ceremony on that day with his family and asked the Prophet to come with him. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, refused and continued to say no until I noticed Abu Talib became angry with him. His paternal aunts also became very angry with him and started saying to him, ‘Muhammad, you never want to attend any ceremonies in the company of your family or to spend much time with them.’ They continued to criticise him thus until he went with them. He went apart from them for as long as Allah willed and then returned to them in a state of fear and panic. His aunts asked him what had happened to him and he said, ‘I am frightened that I might be afflicted by madness.’ They replied, ‘Allah would never test with Shaytan someone who has such a noble character as you do. What did you see?’

He said, ‘Every time I approached one of the idols, a white man appeared before me and shouted at me, “Stay back, Muhammad. Do not touch it.”’ From then until the time when he became a Prophet, he never again took part in any of their ceremonies.

The life of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, demonstrates the validity of Ibn Khaldun’s treatise on the signs of prophethood and acts as a useful commentary on it, as he possessed every one of the traits mentioned by him. Ibn Khaldun said: “Even before receiving revelation, Prophets have good character, are pure, and are averse to committing or intending to commit any blameworthy, sinful action. That is what is meant by *‘isma* (Allah making them immune from wrong action). It is as if by nature they were disposed to avoid and shun

blameworthy actions, and as if such actions were a negation of their very nature."

Ibn Khaldun then proceeded to give some examples from the life of the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, to support his theory. He said, "According to a sound tradition reported in the *Sahih* Collection, when Muhammad was a young man he carried stones with his uncle al-'Abbas in order to rebuild the Ka'ba. He wrapped the stones in his cloak to carry them, and in doing so uncovered part of his body. As this was unbecoming, he fell down in a swoon that lasted until he was covered with his cloak. On another occasion, he was invited to go to a wedding party in which there was going to be much merrymaking. Before he was able to go, however, he fell into a deep sleep which lasted until the sun rose. Thus he did not participate in any of the things that the other guests at the wedding got up to."

The years of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, passed by without mishap and he remained pure and untarnished throughout that period. He remained untarnished by the sins and wrong actions by which nearly all the young men of that society were sullied; and he remained totally pure, because he never even came close to committing *shirk*. He had not once bowed his head to an idol.

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, spent his youth in the house of his uncle Abu Talib. Allah protected him and kept him safe from the evil aspects of *Jahiliyya* society. He did not permit any of those elements of *Jahiliyya* society to pollute his character, because He wanted his nobility to remain absolute so that he should become the best of his people in all the following ways: in manliness, good character, generosity with his time, neighbourliness, clemency, trustworthiness, and truthfulness. He was the furthest of his people from indecency and wrong – in fact he was never once seen arguing with or insulting a single person. His character was so pure, and so many praiseworthy characteristics were gathered in his being, that his people began to call him *al-Amin* (the Trustworthy), and that became the name that he was most commonly known by in Makka.

Nafisa bint Munabbih, the sister of Ya'la ibn Munabbih, said, "By the time the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, reached the age of twenty five years, the only name that people knew him by in Makka was *al-Amin*. This was on account of the perfect nature of his character."

Mundhir related that ar-Rabi' (ibn Khaytham) said, "People used to come in the time of the *Jabiliyya* to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in order to ask him to arbitrate between them. That became his special function after the advent of Islam."

Allah chose him to be His Prophet when he was forty, but even before that He had chosen him for Himself.

Yes indeed! The period of the life of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, that preceded his Mission, was a period of spiritual struggle and endeavour that was characterised by both extraordinary tranquillity and startling severity. Within the period of this continuous struggle there were times of sadness, times of hope and times of wild expectation. All of these elements helped to sharpen the resolve of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and to make it impossible for hopeless despair to find any way into his thoughts. This period of his life was, according to al-Junayd in his definition of *tasawwuf*, forcefulness without compromise.

The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, would crown his yearly spiritual struggle with a month in the cave of Hira', a place where he could enjoy absolute seclusion and could completely divest himself of everything that might distract him from contemplating Allah. Sitting in that place, in the blackness of the night or the brightness of the day, he would try to destroy the barrier and remove the veil; he would try, with his inner sight, to penetrate through to the World of the Unseen, reach the Lote Tree of the Furthest Limit, and arrive at a point closer than two bow-lengths away, so that he could witness Beauty in all its brilliance and Majesty in all its immensity.

This, then, is the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace: a man who gave his all and exerted efforts the like of which no man before or after has ever exerted or even conceived of in his wildest imaginings.

Here he is, a man who witnessed a station so far advanced that no other man could understand it, let alone reach it.

Here he is, a man who walked a path filled with obstacles and steep inclines, although all that was only to increase his resolve, strengthen his will and multiply his eagerness and zeal.

This was the greatest *jihad*, if we use the definition of the word *jihad* found in a well-known Tradition: that it is the act of purifying the soul.

The years passed and their passing seemed both fast and at the same time slow. The *jihad* of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, did not let up until he had become, or had almost become, a pure spirit and a portion of the Light of Allah until he had achieved nearness to his Lord. According to Imam al-Ghazali: "The first time the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was overcome by a state was when he used to go to the cave of Hira', where he would retire from the world, seclude himself with his Lord and spend his time in worship. Seeing this, the Arabs would say about him, "Muhammad loves his Lord passionately."

Then his Mission began and the miracle that was to change the course of history occurred: "*Recite: In the Name of your Lord who created, created man from clots of blood. Recite: And your Lord is the Most Generous, He who taught by the pen, taught man what he did not know.*" (96: 1-5)

Dr. Haykal says, "Muhammad found in it – in religious seclusion and worship – the best way of closely examining and reflecting on those matters that were troubling his soul. He found in it a way of bringing tranquility to his soul and healing his love of solitude. During his devotions he would search for a way of acquiring that which his soul constantly yearned for – knowledge of Allah and understanding of the reasons for the existence of created things.

"Near the top of Mount Hira', which was situated at a distance of two miles from Makka, there was a cave which was perfectly suited for cutting oneself off from the rest of creation and devoting oneself to the worship of Allah. Every year, the Prophet would go up to this cave in order to spend the month of Ramadan there. He would stock up with a small amount of food and water to last

him while he was there and then would devote himself to reflection and worship for the period that he was there. In an environment far removed from the hustle and bustle of life and the clamour of people's voices, he would search for the Truth and nothing but the Truth.

"He would become so involved in contemplation of the Real that he would forget to eat and would forget the whole world around him, because the way he saw the people around him conducting their lives was not true or real.

"When Muhammad was about to turn forty he prepared to go up to the cave of Hira' in order to devote himself to his Lord. Faith had already filled his heart to overflowing on account of the true visions that he had seen, and his soul had already become pure. His Lord had refined him and perfected his character and had guided his heart to the Straight Path and Eternal Reality. He had turned to Allah with every ounce of his soul and had pledged himself to guide his people, who were at the time the epitome of misguidance.

"When he went up to the cave this time, he spent his nights standing in prayer, sharpening his mind, purifying his heart and spending long periods fasting and reflecting on the blessings of his Lord. He would on occasion descend from the cave and go into the desert and then return to his seclusion in order to reflect again on the issues that were floating around his mind and the visions which he had seen.

"This state of his continued for six months, and he became so worried about his state of mind that he began to fear that he might be mentally unstable. So he confided his fears to his wife, Khadija, and revealed to her the things that he had seen. He told her that he was scared that a *jinn* might be playing with his mind. She set the faithful and sincere spirit at rest, reminded him that he was *al-Amin* (the truthful and trustworthy one) and reassured him that it would be impossible for the *jinn* to get close to him. She did all this despite the fact that it had not occurred to either of them that the purpose of this spiritual training was to prepare His Chosen Prophet for that great day that was yet to come: the day that he would receive his first Revelation. Allah was preparing him for his mission.

“One day, while he was sleeping in the cave, the Angel came to him carrying a sheet of paper in his hand and said to him, ‘Read!’”
(*The Life of Muhammad* by Dr. Haykal)

The word ‘Read’ was the beginning of a new stage in the life of the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. From that time forth, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, never once ceased to call people to Allah. He would invite them to enter Islam during the night and during the day. He would call them to Islam in every waking moment.

Chapter 4

The Message: Its causes and motives, goals and aims

The Universal Mission

It is related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Each of the Prophets that came before me was sent to a specific nation whereas I have been sent [as a Prophet] to all nations." (Muslim)

The Banquet

Jabir ibn 'Abdullah, may Allah be pleased with him, related that, "Some angels came to the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, while he was asleep. One of them said to the others, 'He is asleep.' 'His eyes sleep but his heart is wide awake,' said another. Then some of them said, 'He is like a man who builds a house, prepares a banquet and then sends someone out to invite people to it. Each person who accepts the invitation enters the house and eats from the banquet while each person who rejects the invitation does not go into the house or eat from the banquet.' They then said, 'Interpret it for him so that he can understand.' They said, 'The house is the Garden and the one who invites people to it is Muhammad. Whoever obeys Muhammad has obeyed Allah and whoever disobeys Muhammad has disobeyed Allah. It is by Muhammad that people are differentiated from one another.'" (al-Bukhari)

The Likeness of the Prophet, peace be upon him

Jabir ibn 'Abdullah, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "My likeness and that of the Prophets who came before me is that of a man who builds a house. He does a good job and completes the building of the house except for one brick which he does not put into place. Then people start to visit his house and go inside. They like his house very much, but say, 'If it had not been for the lack of that one brick, [the house would have been perfect.]' The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'I am that brick. I have come as the Seal of the Prophets.'" (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

The likeness of the guidance and knowledge that Allah sent him with

Abu Musa al-Ash'ari, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "The likeness of the guidance and knowledge that Allah sent me with is that of heavy rain falling onto the ground. There is a section of the earth that is wholesome and fertile: part of it is soft and soaks up the rain and brings forth plants and grasses in abundance, while another part is hard and retains the water (in lakes and rivers and the like) from which people are able to benefit: they can drink from it, water their animals and irrigate their crops. Then there is another area of the earth upon which the rain falls that is boggy and infertile. This area of the ground neither retains the water nor brings forth plants. This is the metaphor of someone who has come to an understanding of Allah's *Deen*, has benefited by that which I have brought from Allah, Exalted is He, has gained knowledge and passed on what he has learnt; and the metaphor of the one whose head has not been turned by what I have come with and has not accepted the guidance of Allah with which I have been sent." (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Abu Musa also related that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "My likeness and the likeness of that with which Allah has sent me is that of a man who comes to his people and says to them, 'My people, I have seen the enemy army with my own eyes. I am the bare warner and salvation is through following me.' Thereupon a group of his people obeyed him, went out that night and were able to go at a leisurely pace: they were saved. The remaining group rejected his warning and stayed in place the whole night. In the morning the army came upon them and destroyed them utterly. That is the metaphor of a person who obeys me and follows the Truth that I have brought; and the metaphor of the person who disobeys me and rejects the Truth that I have brought." (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

The likeness of the Islamic Community

Ibn 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Your likeness and the likeness of the Jews and Christians is that of a man who employs some workers and says to them, 'Which of you will work from the time of the *Subh* prayer [dawn] until midday for a single *qirat*?' It was the Jews who did the work. Then he says, 'Which of you will work from midday until the time of the *Asr* prayer [mid-afternoon] for a single *qirat*?' It was the Christians who did the work. Then he says, 'Which of you will work from the time of the *Asr* prayer to sunset for two *qirats*?' Verily you are the ones who have done the work. The Jews and Christians became angry and said, 'We have done more work but have received less pay!' He said, 'Have I wronged you or given you less than was your right?' They replied that he had not. He said, 'It is nothing but my bounty which I give to whomsoever I desire.'" (al-Bukhari)

Motives and Aims

Indeed my Lord is Loving and Merciful.

Islam: what does this Divine Word indicate? What may we understand from it?

The Qur'an talks about the meaning of this word in great detail. In fact, we could even say that the whole of the Noble Qur'an is there to explain its significance.

The Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, spoke about the significance of this word; his words were in perfect harmony with the Qur'an, and indeed served to interpret some of the Words of Allah.

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, did not explain the meaning of this word with his words alone. His actions and character also helped to [shed light] on its sense.

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, gave physical form to the concept of Islam. 'A'isha, may Allah be pleased with her, said about the character of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, "His character was the Qur'an."

We ask again, "What do we understand by this?"

This understanding of Islam is what we would like, with the help of Allah, to discuss in some detail; but should we start with aims or with causes? In a manner of speaking, aims and goals are identical to motives and causes – and this is the reality when it comes to Islam.

Allah – Glory be to Him! – says to His noble Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace: "*We have only sent you as a mercy to all the worlds.*" (21:106)

Look at the expression used by the Qur'an, 'a mercy to all the worlds'. Allah did not say 'a mercy to a specific geographical area' or 'a mercy to humankind' but said 'mercy to all the worlds'. He, glory be to Him, made the mercy of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, universal, for everyone and everything.

In our discourse about mercy, we would like to begin by noting that it is one of Allah's attributes. This fact is attested to by the Qur'an and the *Sunna*.

Ar-Rahman (the All-Merciful) is one of Allah's Names. This Name has such an important status amongst the other Names of Allah that it is used interchangeably with the Name of Majesty,

‘Allah’. Allah, Exalted is He, says: “Say: ‘Call on Allah or call on the All-Merciful, whichever you call upon, the Most Beautiful Names are His.’” (17:109)

Ar-Rahim (‘the Most Merciful’) is another of Allah’s Names.

The Mercy of Allah is perfect, universal and all-encompassing. Perfect mercy is, as Imam al-Ghazali says, “Allah pouring forth good things over those who need it, and desiring them for them.” Universal mercy is that which extends both to those who deserve it and to those who do not deserve it, and which extends to things that people need and things that they do not necessarily need, such as luxuries. He truly is the All-Merciful and Most Merciful. And the Qur’an goes further and tells us that He is “*The Most Merciful of the Merciful*” (7:151) and that He is “*The Best of the Merciful*.” (23:119).

There is a wonderful *hadith qudsi* that speaks of the mercy of Allah. There is nothing in the length and breadth of the world or in the full span of history to rival this *hadith* in its exalted nature and majesty. No philosopher or poet has come close, nor has any creed or denomination.

The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, relating the Words of his Lord, “Allah, the Exalted and Majestic, will say on the Day of Rising, “Son of Adam, I was ill and you did not visit Me.”

The son of Adam will reply, “My Lord, how could I visit You when You are the Lord of all the worlds?”

He will say, “Did you not know that My slave so-and-so was ill but you did not visit him? Do you not know that if you had visited him you would have found Me with him?”

“Son of Adam, I asked you for food but you did not feed Me.”

The son of Adam will reply, “My Lord, how could I feed You when You are the Lord of all the worlds?”

Allah will reply, “Did you not know that My slave so-and-so asked you to give him food but you did not feed him? Do you not know that if you had fed him, you would have the reward for that from Me?”

“Son of Adam, I asked you to give me water but you did not give it to Me.”

The son of Adam will say, "My Lord, how could I give You water when You are the Lord of all the worlds?"

He will reply, "My slave so-and-so asked you for water but you did not give it to him. Do you not know that if you had given him water you would have the reward of that from Me?" (Muslim)

This *hadith qudsi* is in complete harmony with the Qur'an and the sound traditions. It is Allah, glory be to Him, who "*sends down abundant rain, after they have lost all hope, and unfolds His mercy. He is the Protector, the Praiseworthy.*" (42:26)

Whenever disaster or adversity befell our rightly-guided ancestors, they would turn to Allah and call on Him by his Names 'the Protector', 'the Praiseworthy'. This would bring contentment and peace to their troubled spirits. Mercy would replace their anxiety.

"*Allah's mercy is close to those who do good.*" (7:55) His mercy extends to them in every moment and encompasses completely every aspect of their lives. The Prophets and Messengers, peace be upon them, are in the highest ranks of the good-doers and we find many examples of Allah's mercy to them within the Noble Qur'an. Allah says: "*And Nuh, when he called out before and We responded to him and rescued him and his family from the terrible plight. We helped him against the people who rejected Our Signs. They were an evil people and We drowned them, every one.*" (21:75-76)

And Allah says, relating the story of Ayyub, peace be upon him: "*And Ayyub when he called out to his Lord, 'Great harm has afflicted me and You are the Most Merciful of the Merciful', We responded to him and removed from him the harm that was afflicting him and restored his family to him; and the same again with them, as a mercy direct from Us and a Reminder to all worshippers.*" (21:82-83)

And He says, relating the story of Yunus, peace be upon him: "*And Dhu'n-Nun, when he left in anger and thought We would not punish him. He called out in the pitch darkness: 'There is no god but You! Glory be to You! Truly I have been one of the wrongdoers'. We responded to him and rescued him from his grief. That is how We rescue the believers.*" (21:86-87)

And He says, relating the story of Zakariyya, peace be upon him: "*And Zakariyya, when he called out to his Lord, 'My Lord, do not leave me on my own, though You are the Best of Inheritors.' We responded to him and gave him Yahya, restoring for him his wife's fertil -*

ity. They outdid one another in good actions, calling out to Us in yearning and in awe, and humbling themselves to Us.” (21:88-89)

Thus we can see that Allah’s mercy is indeed “close to those who do good”. Other examples from the Qur’an include Allah’s Words: “When Our command came, We rescued Hud and those who believed along with him by a mercy from Us. We rescued them from a harsh punishment.” (11:57)

And His Words: “Then when Our command came We rescued Salih and those who believed along with him by a mercy from Us.” (11:65)

And His Words: “When Our command came, We rescued Shu’ayb and those who believed along with him by a mercy from Us.” (11:94)

Allah’s mercy is “close to the good-doers”, but that does not mean that He is only merciful to His Prophets and Messengers. His mercy is close to every single good-doer, to every single person who believes in Allah and acts rightly. Allah says: “Anyone who acts rightly, male or female, and is a believer, We will give them a good life and We will recompense them according to the best of what they did.” (16:97)

His mercy is close to all who possess *taqwa*. It is His mercy that dispels anxiety, eliminates worry and increases provision. He, glory be to Him, says: “Whoever has *taqwa* of Allah – He will give him a way out and provide for him from where he does not expect.” (65: 2-3)

Allah constantly calls on mankind not to despair of His mercy. He says: “Who despairs of the mercy of his Lord except for misguided people?” (15:56)

He, glory be to Him, takes man to task for his miserliness and avarice and reminds him that even if he were to have possessed the storehouses of Allah’s mercy, his miserliness and fear of spending would have made him keep it locked up. Allah says: “Say: ‘Even if you possessed the vast storehouses of my Lord’s mercy, you would still hold back, fearing they would run out.’” (17:100)

If mankind were to look at existence they would find signs of Allah’s mercy in everything. Allah says: “Part of His mercy is that He has made both night and day for you so that you can have your rest and seek His bounty, and so that perhaps you will be thankful.” (28:73)

And He says: *"Among His Signs is that He created spouses for you of your own kind so that you might find tranquillity in them. And He has placed affection and compassion between you. There are certainly Signs in that for people who reflect."* (30:20)

The Divine Principles of Mercy could be enumerated as follows.

- The Mercy of the All-Merciful extends to those who are themselves merciful to others.
- If you are merciful to somebody on the earth, the One who is the heavens will be merciful to you.
- If you are merciful to something, even if it is only a sheep, Allah will be merciful to you.
- If a person sees to the needs of his brother, Allah will see to his needs.
- If a person gives solace to a fellow-Muslim and relieves him of some of the anxieties of this world, Allah will give him solace and relieve him of some of his anxieties on the Day of Rising.
- If a person covers over the faults of a fellow Muslim, Allah will cover over his faults on the Day of Rising.
- Allah will help His slave as long as His slave is helping his fellow Muslim.

‘We have only sent you as a mercy to all the worlds’

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, speaking about his position on this earth, "I am nothing but a mercy that has been bestowed upon the world."

He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is a mercy that Allah has bestowed upon mankind so that he may be merciful to them. The form that his mercy took was by his passing on the teachings that Allah sent down upon him and by his being a perfect example for them to follow, for he demonstrated the way that the perfect human being should be.

It is related that someone said to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, "Messenger of Allah, call down Allah's curse on the idolaters." He, may Allah bless him and

grant him peace, replied, "I was not sent to curse people, but I was sent as a mercy." (Muslim)

Whenever he had the opportunity, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, would remind the Muslims about being merciful. One time, while the Muslims were returning from the battle of Dhat ar-Riqa', a man took a hatchling from its nest. One of the hatchling's parents approached the man who had taken the young bird, and threw itself in his path. The people who observed this were amazed by the bird's action. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, seized the opportunity – as was his wont – to counsel and admonish them, remind of Allah and instil in the Muslims a love of mercy. He said, 'Are you really amazed by the actions of this bird? You took its child and so it threw itself in your path on account of its compassion for it. By Allah, your Lord is more compassionate and merciful with you than this bird is with its chick.'

On another occasion, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, saw a mother clasp her child to her breast and treat it with profound affection and deep love. He turned to his companions and said to them, "Would you believe this woman to be capable of throwing her son into the fire?" "No, we would not believe that, Messenger of Allah," they replied. Thereupon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "By Allah, Allah is more compassionate to His slaves than this woman is to her child."

On one occasion, one of the desert Arabs saw the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, kiss one of his grandsons. He remarked to him in astonishment, "You kiss your sons? I have ten sons and I have never kissed a single one of them." The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, informed him with an air of disapproval that Allah had removed mercy and compassion from his heart.

The mercy of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, even extended to animals. The books of *Sira* relate that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, passed by the garden of one of the men of the Ansar one day and went into it. As soon as he had entered, within it he found a camel that was in much distress – its eyes were watering and groans

emitted from its throat. The Prophet approached the camel, stroked it with his hands, and the camel was silent. Then he asked, "Who is the owner of this camel?" A young man from the *Ansar* came forward and said that the camel was his. The Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said to him, "Have you no fear of Allah in the way that you have treated this animal that Allah has placed in your possession? You have starved it and completely exhausted it!" The *Ansari* youth felt great shame at what the Prophet had said to him, and from that day onwards his treatment of the camel changed.

One of the things that it is important for us to be aware of is that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to talk about mercy, would encourage people to act mercifully, and used to define what mercy meant in respect of the *Deen*. Some of his Companions said to him, "We are merciful to our wives, our children and our families." This statement did not satisfy the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, because it indicated a limited understanding on their part: mercy should be universal and all-encompassing. So the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, responded to them by saying, "That is not simply what I want. I want there to be a universal concept of mercy."

There is no doubt that part of acting with compassion is to be merciful to one's wives, children and families, and indeed the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, encouraged his community to do that. That, however, is not the whole picture. What the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, wanted was for mercy to permeate every cell of the human being and for it to become part of a person's nature so that he would be merciful instinctively. He wanted his community to act as if they were themselves participants in the mercy of Allah, walking through the earth and scattering it as they went. And indeed, if a person were to act thus, then he would have stamped upon his own character that universal mark that characterises the Islamic Message (i.e. mercy) and would deservedly be encompassed by the mercy of Allah.

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, taught his Companions to understand that mercy should be

extended to all. His mercy was not shown only to human beings, but also to animals and every other thing in the heavens and the earth, as we mentioned before. Therefore, we can say that the Islamic concept of mercy extends to animals as well.

The son of 'Amr ibn al-'As, may Allah be pleased with them both, related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "A woman will enter the Fire because of a cat – she tied it up and did not feed it, or even allow it to eat the vermin of the earth (such as lizards, rats and the like)."

Sahl ibn al-Hanzaliyya, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, passed by a camel that was so thin that its stomach was sunk in. He said, "Have fear of Allah in your treatment of these dumb animals (i.e. treat them well). Ride them when they are healthy and eat them when they are healthy."

Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "A man came to a well, bent down and drank from it. There was a dog beside the well, panting on account of thirst. The man felt pity for the dog, so he took off one of his shoes, filled it with water and gave it to the dog. Allah was pleased with him and admitted him into the Garden." (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

This is a small selection of the many *hadiths* that portray the abundant mercy and compassion that characterised the soul of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and indeed this mercy has become the hallmark by which this community is recognised.

Jarir ibn 'Abdullah, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Whoever is not merciful to other people, Allah will not be merciful to him."

Abu Musa, may Allah be pleased with him, related that he heard the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, say to one of his Companions, "You will not truly believe until you are merciful to each other." They replied, "Messenger of Allah, each one of us is merciful." He said, "It is not the mercy that you have for your companions that you need to complete your faith, but the mercy you have for the masses (i.e. everyone and everything else)."

Jarir ibn 'Abdullah, may Allah be pleased with him, related that he heard the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, say, "If a person is merciful to somebody on the earth, He who is in the Heavens will be merciful to him."

"I am nothing but a mercy that has been bestowed upon the world"

Allah, Exalted is He, says to His Noble Messenger in the Glorious Qur'an: *"We have only sent you as a mercy to all the worlds"* (21:106), thus proving that the mercy of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was not limited to any geographical region but extended to absolutely everything in creation. We have already discussed mercy as being one of Allah's Attributes, but now we want to talk about the mercy of the Messenger of Allah. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, encountered the Angel in the cave of Hira', and there began the Islamic Message in all its splendour. This beginning is recorded in Allah's Words: *"Recite: 'In the Name of your Lord who created, created man from clots of blood.' Recite: 'And your Lord is the Most Generous, He who taught by the pen, taught man what he did not know.'"* (96:1-5)

'A'isha, may Allah be pleased with her, said, "The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, returned from the cave with the verses and with a trembling heart. He entered in upon Khadija bint Khuwaylid, may Allah be pleased with her, and said to her, "Cover me! Cover me!". They covered him and remained there sitting [under his cover] until his fear had passed. Then he informed Khadija about what had happened to him and said to her, "I feared for myself that I might be mad."

"Khadija told him, "That cannot be the case, by Allah! Allah would never humiliate you like that, for you maintain your family ties, take on other people's burdens, give to the destitute, receive your guests with hospitality and help those afflicted by calamity." (al-Bukhari)

Khadija, may Allah be pleased with her, knew the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, as well as anyone and as well

as it was possible to know him. She had grown to know him so well because of her intimate relationship with him. When he said to her, "I fear for myself that I have been afflicted by madness," she immediately swore without hesitating for even a second that Allah would never humiliate or disgrace him. Then she justified her assertion that it was impossible that Allah would disgrace him by enumerating certain aspects of his character. The thing that binds all these characteristics together is mercy. Khadija, with her pure and enlightened insight, well understood that one of the rules by which Allah governs creation is that His Mercy is close to those who are merciful in this world and, because the Messenger of Allah was so merciful to those around him, the Most Merciful would never humiliate him.

In her description of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, Khadija began by saying, "You maintain your family ties."

In Islam, the word '*rahim*' (kinship) refers, first and foremost, to the parents, and then to the rest of the family. Great importance is attached to a person's father and mother in Islam and Allah mentions them both many times in the Qur'an, usually straight after making mention of the fundamental doctrine of Islam: the doctrine of Unity.

For example, Allah says: "*Your Lord has decreed that you should worship none but Him, and that you should show kindness to your parents. Whether one or both of them reach old age with you, do not say 'Ugh!' to them out of irritation and do not be harsh with them but speak to them with gentleness and generosity. Take them under your wing, out of mercy, with due humility and say: 'Lord, show mercy to them as they cared for me when I was small.'*" (17:23-24)

Allah compares the way that two different groups of people treat their parents. The actions of one of these groups of people are accepted by Allah and He rewards them for their good actions and overlooks their wrong actions. He says about them: "*We have instructed man to be good to his parents. His mother bore him with hardship, and with hardship gave birth to him; and his bearing and weaning took thirty months. Then when he achieves his full strength and reaches forty, he says, 'My Lord, keep me thankful for the blessing You bestowed on me and on my parents, and keep me acting rightly,*

pleasing You. And make my descendants righteous. I have turned in repentance to You and I am truly one of the Muslims.' Those are people whose best deeds will be accepted and whose wrong deeds will be overlooked. They are among the Companions of the Garden, in fulfilment of the true promise made to them." (46:14-15)

As for the other group, Allah has described them as being the losers. Those are the ones who disobey their parents and treat them without respect. Allah says about them: "*But what of him who says to his parents, 'Fie on you! Do you promise me that I will be resurrected, when generations before me have passed away?'? They both call on Allah for help: 'Woe to you! Believe! Allah's promise is true.' But he says, 'This is nothing but the myths of previous peoples.' Those are people of whom the statement about the nations, both of jinn and men, who passed away before them, has also proved true; truly they were the lost."* (46:16-17)

There are also many famous *hadiths* of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, that deal with maintaining the ties of kinship.

Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: "Allah created creation. After He had completed it, Kinship asked, 'Is this the station of the one who seeks protection with You from cutting the ties of kinship?' 'Yes,' Allah replied, 'Are you not content that I should maintain ties with the one who maintains ties with you and cut off the one who cuts you off?' 'Of course I am, my Lord,' said Kinship. 'Then it shall be so,' He said. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'Recite the following verses if you want: "*Is it not likely that, if you did turn away, you would cause corruption in the earth and sever your ties of kinship? Such are the people Allah has cursed, making them deaf and blinding their eyes.*" (47:23-24)"' (al-Bukhari)

Khadija, may Allah be pleased with her, next says, "You bear other people's burdens." The Arabic word '*kall*' that is used in this sentence signifies a person who is not able to cope on his own and needs somebody to bear some of his burdens. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to take on the burdens of such people.

The next description Khadija gives us of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is that he would "give to the destitute". The definition of a destitute person is a person who has neither residual wealth nor income coming in. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, would offer help to such people.

Khadija next says, "You receive guests with hospitality." The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was generous and magnanimous.

Ibn 'Abbas described his generosity by saying, "He was the most generous of people, and was at his most generous in Ramadan when Jibril came to see him. Jibril would come to him every night during the month of Ramadan in order to go over the Qur'an with him. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was more generous with his wealth than a cooling wind that brings goodness."

Khadija then says, "You help those who have been afflicted by calamity."

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to hurry to bring succour and aid to anyone who had been afflicted by a calamity. He would sometimes give money and sometimes offer his advice. Sometimes he would offer charity and sometimes a kind word. On some occasions he would offer words of encouragement and on others he would merely try to plant the spirit of optimism in the heart of the one who had been afflicted.

Ibn Hajar said about these words of Khadija, "Her words 'You help those who have been afflicted by calamity' serve to gather together all the other groups of people indicated by the sentences preceding them." This is a profound understanding of her comprehensive description.

Khadija, may Allah be pleased with her, deduced from her description of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, that Allah would never humiliate him, because that description contained so many merciful and compassionate characteristics.

Thus Khadija had articulated the first law in Islam, that "If a person is merciful then Allah will not humiliate him in this World or the Next."

This is a law that is universal in the Islamic ethos and is not specific to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. If a person wants to be safe from being disgraced by Allah in this world and the Next, then he should take it upon himself always to be merciful. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, says: "If you are merciful, then you will be treated with mercy. If you forgive people, then you will be forgiven." (al-Bukhari, Ahmad and Bayhaqi)

Allah clearly shows the extent of the mercy of the Messenger when He says: "*A Messenger has come to you from among yourselves. Your suffering is distressing to him; he is deeply concerned for you; he is gentle and merciful to the believers.*" (9:129)

The Noble Qur'an records the Prophet's great aspiration for his people to be guided and his fear that they might be destroyed. His fear for his people was so great that it even affected his health. Allah says: "*Perhaps you will destroy yourself with grief because they will not become believers.*" (26:2) He also says: "*Perhaps you may destroy yourself with grief, chasing after them, if they do not believe in these words.*" (18:6)

Now we will return to our main theme. Allah says: "*We have only sent you as a mercy to all the worlds.*" (21:106)

Imam Ar-Razi said:

"He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was a mercy in terms both of the *deen* and this world. "As for his being a mercy in terms of the *deen*, that was because he was sent at a time when people were in a state of misguidance and ignorance. At the same time, the people of the two Books (the Jews and Christians), because they had been around for so long without their guidance being renewed and because of the fact that they had begun to differ about their Holy Books, were in a state of total confusion about their own religions. So Allah sent Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, at a time when there was no way for any person seeking the Truth to succeed in finding it. He called people to the Truth and showed the way to attain success and reward. He legislated laws for people to follow, and distinguished the lawful from the unlawful.

"The only people who were able to benefit from this mercy were those who truly aspired to discover the Reality: those who did not just blindly and stubbornly follow their forebears in arrogance and misguided ignorance. Success comes from seeking the Truth.

"Allah says: 'Say: *"It is guidance and healing for people who believe. Those who do not believe have heaviness in their ears and for them it is blindness. Such people are being called from a very distant place."*' (41:43)

"As for his being a mercy in terms of this world, that was because, through his efforts and teachings, many people freed themselves from lives of permanent degradation and strife; lives of constant warring and conflict. These people were victorious on account of the *deen* which he brought."

Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was asked. "Messenger of Allah, call down Allah's curse on the idolaters." He replied, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, "I was not sent to curse people, but as a mercy." (Muslim)

May Allah shower His blessings upon you, O my master, O Messenger of Allah.

"He teaches them the Book and wisdom and purifies them"

We have already discussed Allah's great wisdom in sending the Seal of the Prophets, and this is well exemplified by Allah's Words: "*We have only sent you as a mercy to all the worlds.*" (21:106).

Now we would like to paint a general picture of how Allah and His Messenger would ideally like the Islamic Community to be: a group of people putting into action the teachings of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

Allah, in many different verses within the Qur'an, summarises the way in which such a community comes into being. He says: "*Allah showed great kindness to the believers when He sent a Messenger to them from among themselves to recite His Signs to them and purify*

them and teach them the Book and Wisdom, even though before that they were clearly misguided.” (3:164)

And He says: *“It is He who raised up among the unlettered people a Messenger from them to recite His Signs to them and purify them and teach them the Book and Wisdom, even though before that they were clearly misguided.” (62:2)*

And He says: *“Alif Lam Ra. This is a Book We have sent down to you so that you may bring mankind from the darkness to the light, by the permission of their Lord, to the Path of the Almighty, the Praiseworthy.” (14:1-2)*

To summarise, we could say about the Islamic community as it should be that “It is a knowledgeable community, purified by the divine principles upon which it has been built. All the efforts of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, were to bring this community from darkness into light; to bring this community from the darkness of ignorance to the light of guidance and from the darkness of foolishness to the light of guidance. This is clear from the Qur’an, because he, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was sent to *“recite His Signs to them, teach them the Book and Wisdom and purify them.”*

In order to explain what these verses mean, we would like to start in the same way that Allah opened the Constitution of the Islamic Community (in other words, the Noble Qur’an). The first Word that He, glory be to Him, revealed was *“Iqra”* (‘Read’, or ‘recite’) and the first verses that were revealed on that blessed night when the Mission of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, began were: *“Read: In the Name of your Lord who created, created man from clots of blood. Read: And your Lord is the Most Generous, He who taught by the pen, taught man what he did not know.” (96:1-5)*

These first verses mention twice the command to read and mention three times *‘ilm* (the Arabic word meaning ‘knowledge’; the words ‘to teach’ and ‘to know’ come from the same root letters). They also mention the pen, which is one of the instruments by which knowledge is obtained.

After Muhammad ‘Abduh had given his commentary on these verses, he followed that up by saying that “There could no better or more eloquent way of indicating the excellence of reading,

writing and knowledge in all its forms than by these first magnificent verses revealed by Allah to His Messenger."

Allah began the Revelation of what was to become the *Deen* of Islam with these miraculous and eternally relevant verses – that mention reading, writing and the pen, and repeatedly refer to the concept of knowledge and learning.

The next verse to be revealed after these was Allah's Words: "Nun. *By the Pen and what they write down.*" (68:1)

On this second time that the Qu'ranic Revelation was sent down, Allah, glory be to Him, began the verses with one of the letters of the Arabic alphabet and then made an oath by the Pen and by the act of writing. Therefore, the first oath to be mentioned in the Qur'an was by the Pen and what the pen writes down.

Indeed, the name of this Noble Book was 'the Qur'an' (the word 'Qur'an' is take from a root meaning 'to read'). According to ar-Raghib al-Isfahani, "One of the scholars said, "The reason why this Book, of all the Books of Allah, is called a 'Qur'an', is not only that it contains the fruit of the other Books, but also that it contains the fruit of every kind of knowledge. Allah indicates this fact with His Words: "*A clarification of everything*" (12:111) and His words, "*A Book making all things clear.*" (16:89)

The Qur'an, by means of its name, by means of the first verses of it to be revealed, and by means of its first oath, guides mankind towards knowledge and the means of obtaining it: in other words, towards reading, writing and study.

What is the status of knowledge within Islam?

Allah, Exalted is He, says: "*Only those of His slaves with knowledge have fear of Allah.*" (35:28)

This type of fear of Allah, which comes as a result of having knowledge of Allah, is one of the foundations for submitting oneself before the Face of Allah. We may conclude from this that in Islam the acquiring of knowledge is a necessity, not a luxury. Indeed, it is one of the bases upon which Islam is built.

For that reason, one of the essential components that serve to make up the identity of a Muslim is knowledge: knowledge of Allah, knowledge of existence and knowledge of oneself. Indeed, learning is recommended whatever form it takes.

Imam al-Bukhari entitled one of the chapters of his *Sahih* collection 'The Book of Knowledge' and sub-divided it into smaller chapters. He called one of these smaller chapters 'Knowledge Before Speech and Action', following the Qur'anic injunction: "*Know, then, that there is no God but Allah.*" (47:20)

He began with knowledge and by mentioning that the '*ulama*' (scholars) are the heirs of the Prophets: they inherit knowledge from them. He said that "whoever acquires knowledge has obtained a great portion" and "whoever follows a path seeking knowledge by it, Allah will level out a path for him to the Garden". Allah says: "*Only those of His slaves with knowledge have fear of Allah*" (35:28); and He says: "*But only those with knowledge understand them.*" (29:43) He also says: "*They will say, 'If only we had listened and used our intellect, we would not have been Companions of the Blaze'*" (67:10); and He also says: "*Say: 'Are they the same – those who know and those who do not know?'*" (39:10)

The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "If Allah desires good for a person, he gives him understanding of the *deen*," and also, "Knowledge only comes through learning and study."

Abu Dharr, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "If you were to place a sword here" – and he pointed to his throat – "and I thought that I was able to put into action a statement that I had heard from the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, before you completed cutting my throat, then I would do so."

Ibn 'Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "Be people of the Lord: be people of clemency and people of knowledge." A '*rabbani*' ('person of the Lord') is one who educates people by teaching them the small things before the big things.

'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "There are only two types of people for whom one is entitled to feel envy: a man to whom Allah gives wealth and who spends it all

in the correct way; and a man upon whom Allah bestows wisdom and who judges by it and teaches it to others."

What does this fear of Allah that comes out of possessing knowledge lead to? What is the final understanding that sincere, believing scholars come arrive at?

Allah, Exalted is He, says: *"Allah bears witness that there is no god but Him, as do the angels and the people of knowledge, upholding justice. There is no god but Him, the Almighty, the All-Wise."* (3:18)

Such people arrive by following the path of knowledge whose fruit is fear of Allah at an understanding of the Oneness of Allah. This doctrine of Unity is the essential feature of the *deen* of Islam, and is in reality the essential characteristic of sincere religiosity.

In the verse mentioned above, Allah links the people of knowledge to Him and to His angels, by saying that they bear witness with Him to His Oneness. That is the highest possible honour that could have been bestowed upon the people of knowledge, and indicates the exalted station they hold with their Lord.

Bearing witness to the Oneness of Allah is the first pillar of Islam. It is to attest that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. The only people who truly bear witness to this are the people of knowledge among the believers, for there are verses in the Qur'an concerning the Oneness of Allah that may only be understood by those who possess knowledge, on account of the magnificence and complexity of the language. Allah says:

"Say: 'Praise be to Allah and peace be upon His slaves whom He has chosen.' Is Allah better, or what you associate with Him?

"He Who created the heavens and the earth and sends down water for you from the sky by which We make luxuriant gardens grow – you could never make their trees grow. Is there another god besides Allah? No indeed, but they are people who equate others with Him!

"He Who made the earth a stable dwelling-place, set rivers flowing through its midst, placed firmly embedded mountains upon it, and set a barrier between the two seas. Is there another god besides Allah? No indeed, but most of them do not know it!

"He Who responds to the oppressed when they call on Him and removes their distress, and has appointed you as vicegerents on the earth. Is there another god besides Allah? How little you pay heed!"

"He Who guides you in the darkness of land and sea and sends out the winds bringing advance news of His mercy. Is there another god besides Allah? Allah is far exalted above what they associate with Him!" (27:61-66)

Allah, glory be to Him, concludes these verses by informing us that no matter how much knowledge a person obtains, there is still a great deal that he does not know; and that the only one who knows the Great Unknown and the Unseen is Allah Himself, glory be to Him. The point of this Noble Postscript is to let us know that there is no end to knowledge, and that acquiring it is a lifelong task that will never end as long as the Heavens and the Earth remain:

"Say: 'No one in the heavens and the earth knows the Unseen except Allah.' They are not aware of when they will be raised." (27:67)

To enable man to bear witness to the Oneness of Allah, and to enable him to reach the highest levels of which mankind is capable, Islam places great emphasis upon the acquisition of knowledge – and indeed considers it to be one of the foundations upon which the *deen* is built. This is attested to most eloquently by a great number of verses and *hadiths*.

As for the rank that the people of knowledge have with their Lord, it is a most elevated one. Allah says: *"Allah will raise in rank those of you who believe and those who have been given knowledge."* (58:11)

Having proved the excellence of knowledge and scholars, Allah then orders His Messenger, whose example all Muslims strive to follow, to say: *"My Lord, increase me in knowledge."* (20:111) This should be the watchword of the Muslims: 'My Lord, increase me in knowledge every moment and every day.' For whenever a Muslim increases in knowledge his fear of Allah increases accordingly, and whenever his fear increases his submission to his Lord becomes more and more perfect.

It is important for us as Muslims never to forget that this new age of enlightenment began with a single word revealed to the Chosen Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. That word was 'Read'.

"I am pleased with Islam as the *deen* for you"

We would like now to return to the question with which we opened this chapter: what do we understand by the word 'Islam'? We have tackled one aspect of this question in the past few pages, but have by no means exhausted the topic. We would now like to approach this question in a slightly different way and will base our response on the principle that the truthfulness of a message indicates the truthfulness of the messenger.

Allah has made it clear to us – the Islamic community – that He is pleased with Islam as the *deen* for us. He has also made it clear that in His sight there is no other acceptable *deen*. Allah says: "*The deen in the sight of Allah is Islam.*" (3:19)

We can understand from this verse, then, that one feature of Islam is that it is a universal *deen* for all of mankind.

That is why the *deen* was called 'Islam'. This name does not refer back to a historical personality like the religions of Buddhism, which was named after Buddha, or Confucianism, which was named after Confucius. Nor does the name indicate a race, like Judaism, or a place or time. The name 'Islam' is not limited by any of those things. Indeed, when we hear 'Islam' and understand its meaning, we are immediately plunged in the ocean of absoluteness and universality.

As for the meaning of the word, there are many Qur'anic verses and Prophetic *hadiths* that indicate aspects of it. However, its full meaning is the Qur'an in its entirety, as well as all the things that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said and did. For the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, applied the teachings of Islam to form the model society, and in so doing took Islam from the realm of theory into the realm of practical reality.

As the reader may know, Plato, upon completing his great work *The Republic*, was given the opportunity to put the theories that he had laid down in that book into practice and to create the perfect republic. He failed absolutely. Then a few years later, he was given a second opportunity and his attempts again collapsed in total failure. Those failures are sufficient proof that the ideas that he put forward in his *Republic* were entirely theoretical and impractical.

That was not the case with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and his teachings. He took the teachings and principles of Islam, and with them formed a living and working society that conducted its affairs in a manner pleasing to Allah. He changed the society in which he lived and dragged it from *Jabiliyya* into Islam, from idolatry into *tawhid*. This change was not merely superficial but was root and branch; and it did not just affect the society but also the individuals that made it up. All aspects of society were changed: behaviour, creed and legislation.

If you want proof of then look, if you will, at the *Jabiliyya* society which preceded the advent of Islam, and then compare it to the Islamic society that followed. Read the history of the great companions – men such as ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab and Khalid ibn al-Walid – before and after they became Muslim. You will see the huge difference between the two eras and the way that the whole demeanour of such people changed. The essence of Islam and what gave it its strength was its doctrine of Unity.

The Muslim scholar al-Biruni, who the Orientalist Sachau said “was one of the greatest men in Islamic civilisation and the greatest intellect of the Middle Ages”, took it upon himself to examine every religion in great detail and find out what its essential feature was. When he came to Islam, he said, “The essential character of Islam may be expressed in a single word. That word is *tawhid* (Oneness).”

Allah says: “Say, ‘O People of the Book, come to a word which is the same for us and you: that we should worship none but Allah and not associate any partners with Him, and not take one another as lords besides Allah.’ If they turn away, say, ‘Bear witness that we are Muslims.’” (3:63)

Let us now return to the Qur'anic verse: "*I am pleased with Islam as a deen for you*" (5:3), in order to see some of the things that result from it. Allah explains what His accepting only Islam means in practice when He says: "*When Allah desires to guide some one, He expands his breast to Islam. When He desires to misguide some one, He makes his breast narrow and constricted as if he were climbing up into the sky. That is how Allah defiles those who do not believe*" (6:126); when He says: "*As for the one whose breast has been opened to Islam, he is on a light from his Lord*" (39:21); and when He says: "*You who believe, have taqwa of Allah with the taqwa due to Him and do not die except as Muslims.*" (3:102)

The Qur'anic words that we have taken as the title of this section were part of the verse that concluded that Noble and Enlightened Book. Allah says: "*Today I have perfected your deen for you and completed My blessing upon you and I am pleased with Islam as the deen for you.*" (5:3)

'Ali ibn Talha related that Ibn 'Abbas said that when Allah said "*Today I have perfected your deen for you...*", He was informing his Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and the believers that He had perfected the faith for them so that they would never need anything more; that Allah had made it complete for them so that it would never diminish; and that Allah was pleased with it for them and would never be displeased with it.

The great Imam, Ibn Kathir, may Allah be pleased with him, said concerning Allah's Words "*I am pleased with Islam as the deen for you*", that what it really means is, "Be pleased with Islam as the *deen* for yourselves, because Islam is the *deen* that Allah loves and is pleased with, and it is the *deen* that the best of His Messengers brought and with which the Noblest of His Books was sent down."

Many of the Companions commented on these verses, and many of their comments are recorded in the books of *hadith* by Al-Bukhari, Muslim and others. We will relate two of the instances in which this happened.

According to Tariq ibn Shihab, "One of the Jews came to 'Umar ibn al-Khattab and said to him, 'Commander of the Believers, there is a verse which you recite in your Book, if it been revealed to us – meaning the Jews – we would have made the day

of its revelation into an 'Id ('day of celebration' or 'holy day'). 'Which verse is that?' asked 'Umar ibn al-Khattab. The Jew replied, 'Allah's Words: "*Today I have perfected your deen for you and completed My blessing upon you and I am pleased with Islam as a deen for you.*"' 'Umar replied, 'By Allah, I know the day in which that verse was revealed and I even know the time of day at which the verse came down. It was revealed in the evening of the day of 'Arafat on a Friday.'" (al-Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad, at-Tirmidhi and an-Nasa'i)

'Ammar, a *mawla* (client) of the Banu Hashim, related that Ibn 'Abbas, may Allah be pleased with them both, recited aloud the verse: "*Today I have perfected your deen for you and completed My blessing upon you and I am pleased with Islam as a deen for you.*" One of the Jews said to him, "Had this verse been revealed to us we would have taken the day it came down as a holy day." Ibn 'Abbas replied, "It was revealed on a day in which two holy days combined: The day of 'Id ('Arafat being an 'Id) and the day of *Jumu'a*." (Ibn Jarir)

In the same way that Muslims consider the day the verse "*Read, in the Name of your Lord who created*" was revealed to be the day the Revelation began, they also consider the day the verse "*Today I have perfected your deen for you...*" refers to as being the day the Revelation was completed, and they have taken both days as holy days.

Jabir ibn 'Abdullah recalled, "I heard the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, say, "Jibril told [me], 'Allah says, "This is a *deen* that I am pleased with for myself [meaning, I do not accept any other *deen*]. It is not befitting for anyone to adopt this *deen* unless he acts with generosity and good manners, so honour anyone who accompanies you by treating them with generosity and good manners.'" (al-Baghawi)

The essential characteristic of Islam, as we have already said, is the doctrine of Unity: oneness in creed, oneness in worship and oneness in good character. The doctrine of Oneness in belief is expressed by the words of truthfulness and sincerity "I bear witness that there is no god except Allah". This belief in the Oneness of Allah was the basis of the Islamic Message in Makka, and continued to be so in Madina.

Rabi'a ibn 'Ibad – who was not a Muslim at the time of the incident he relates here but became Muslim later – stated, "I saw the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, with my own eyes in the *Dhu'l-Majaz* market and heard him say, 'People, say "There is no god but Allah" and you will have success.'" (Ahmad)

The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said on the same subject, "Renew your faith." He was asked, "Messenger of Allah, how do we renew our faith?"

He replied, "Say often 'There is no god but Allah'." (Ahmad and Tabarani)

Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: "No one, as long as he has avoided committing the great sins, has ever said 'There is no god but Allah' with sincerity, except that all the Gates of Heaven will be opened up for him until he reaches the Throne." (an-Nasa'i)

Jabir, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, stated, "The best form of *dhikr* is '*La ilaha illa'llah*' ('There is no god but Allah') and the best form of supplication is '*al-hamdu lillah*' ('Praise belongs to Allah')." (Ibn Majah, an-Nasa'i, ibn Hibban and al-Hakim)

One of the expressions that articulates the doctrine of Unity very well is the saying of the Believers: "*La ilaha illa'llah, wabduhu la sharika labu, labu'l-mulk wa labu'l-hamdu, wa huwa 'ala kulli shai'in qadir*." ("There is no god but Allah, One without partner. The kingdom belongs to Him and praise belongs to Him. He has power over everything.")

By saying this particular expression, a Muslim obtains much reward. This saying has a very exalted rank in the eyes of Allah. Ya'qub ibn 'Asim related from two Companions of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, that they heard the Messenger say, "No slave has ever uttered with his tongue, 'There is no god but Allah, One without partner. The kingdom belongs to Him and praise belongs to Him. He has power over everything', believing that to be true in his heart and turning to Allah sincerely with his soul, except that Allah will open up the heavens for him until [he comes to a place] where Allah will look

at him. It is the right of every slave whom Allah looks at that He should grant him his request."

'Amr ibn Shu'ayb related from his father from his grandfather that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "The best supplication is that on the Day of 'Arafat. The best thing that I and the Prophets who came before me have ever said is that 'There is no god but Allah, One without partner. The kingdom belongs to Him and praise belongs to Him. He has power over everything.'" (at-Tirmidhi)

As regards the reward for saying this, Abu Hurayra has related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, remarked, "If a person says 'There is no god but Allah, One without partner. The kingdom belongs to Him and praise belongs to Him. He has power over everything' one hundred times, his reward will be as if he had freed ten slaves. One hundred good actions will be written for him and one hundred bad actions will be erased, and he will be protected from the wiles of Shaytan for that entire day. No one has brought anything better than that, except someone who does more of the same." (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Another of the expressions that well articulates the doctrine of *tawhid* is the saying: "*La hawla wa la quwwata illa billah*", "There is no power and no strength except by Allah." This saying is one of the treasures of Paradise. Abu Musa, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, told him, "Say 'There is no power and no strength except by Allah'. It is one of the treasures of Paradise." (al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, at-Tirmidhi, an-Nasa'i and Ibn Majah)

Al-Hakim related – and he declared that the *hadith* was totally sound – that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said to Abu Hurayra, "Should I not teach you a saying which is from under the Throne and which is one of the treasures of Paradise? Then say, 'There is no power and no strength except by Allah' and Allah will say, "My slave has become Muslim and submitted."

Abu Ayyub al-Ansari, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Messenger of Allah, in the course of his Night Journey,

passed by the Prophet Ibrahim, peace be upon him. Ibrahim asked, "Who is that with you, Jibril?" Jibril said, "This is Muhammad."

"Then Ibrahim, peace and blessings be upon him, said, "Muhammad, order your community to do much cultivation of Paradise, for its earth is wholesome and its lands are vast."

"Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asked, "What is the seed by which Paradise is cultivated?"

He replied, peace be upon him, "The saying, 'There is no power and no strength except by Allah'."

These sayings have such great rewards attached to them because they are expressions of sincere *tawhid*.

Chapter 5

The Pledge of Allegiance

The connection between the pledge of allegiance and the whole concept of the Message is very clear, for the pledge of allegiance carries the Message. Therefore this chapter has a very strong connection to the ones preceding it. This chapter explains the true meaning of the Message in a slightly different way.

‘Ubada ibn as-Samit (who was a Companion present at the Battle of Badr and was one of the leaders on the Night of ‘Aqaba) related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said to a group of the Companions who were standing around him, “Pledge allegiance to me on the basis that you will not associate anything with Allah, or steal or fornicate, or kill your children, or give a false ascription of paternity – making up lies about your bodies – or disobey me in respect of anything right. If you fulfil your oath then you will have your reward from Allah. If you do any of the things that you have pledged not to and are then punished in this world, that will be an expiation of your sins. If you do any of the things that you have pledged not to and then Allah veils your sins, then your recompense will be with Allah: if He wills, He will forgive you and, if He wills, He will punish you. So pledge allegiance to me on that basis.” (al-Bukhari)

Salma bint Qays (who was one the maternal aunts of the Messenger of Allah, had prayed with him towards both *qiblas* and was one of the women of the tribe of ‘Adi ibn an-Najjar) said, “I came to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, with a group of women from the Ansar in order to pledge allegiance to him. When he stipulated to us that we not associate anything with Allah, or steal or fornicate, or kill our children, or give a false ascription of paternity – making up lies about our bodies – or disobey him in respect of anything that is right, he also said, ‘And do not deceive your husbands.’ We pledged allegiance to him on that basis and then went away. I said to one of

the women of the Ansar, 'Go back to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and ask him what he means by "deceiving our husbands".' She asked him and he replied, "A woman deceives her husband by taking his money and giving it to other people." (Ahmad)

The pledge of allegiance given by the woman is mentioned in the Qur'an. Allah says: "*O Prophet, when women who believe come to you pledging allegiance to you on the basis that they will not associate anything with Allah or steal or fornicate or kill their children or give a false ascription of paternity – making up lies about their bodies – or disobey you in respect of anything right, then accept their pledge and ask forgiveness for them. Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful.*" (60:12)

Jarir ibn 'Abdullah said that he went to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and told him, "I want to pledge allegiance to you on the basis of Islam." He added, "He imposed certain conditions on me and instructed me to show goodwill to all Muslims." Jarir said, "We pledged allegiance to him on that basis."

One of the verses that details this pledge of allegiance is Allah's Words: "*Say: 'Come and I will recite to you what your Lord has prohibited for you': that you not associate anything with Him; that you be good to your parents; that you not kill your children because of poverty – We will provide for you and them; that you not approach indecency – outward or inward; and that you not kill any person Allah has made inviolate – except with the right to do so. That is what He instructs you to do so that perhaps you may use your intellects. And that you not go near the property of orphans before they reach maturity – except in a good way; that you give full measure and full weight with justice – We impose on no self any more than it can bear; that you be equitable when you speak, even if a near relative is concerned; and that you fulfil Allah's contract. That is what He instructs you to do, so that perhaps you may pay heed. This is My Path and it is straight, so follow it. Do not follow other ways or you will become cut off from His Way. That is what He instructs you to do, so that perhaps you may be godfearing.*" (6:152-154)

If we want a Qur'anic summary of the teachings of Islam, the following verse stipulates that: "*Allah commands justice and doing good and giving to relatives, and He forbids indecency and doing wrong and tyranny. He warns you so that perhaps you may pay heed.*" (16:90)

Imam al-'Izz ibn Abdu's-Salam wrote a book entitled *Kitab ash-Shajara* (Book of the Tree) in which he demonstrated that every single law of the *Shari'a* is implicit in this verse.

Allah says: *"Goodness does not lie in turning your faces to the East or to the West. Rather, those with true devoutness are those who believe in Allah and the Last Day, the Angels, the Book and the Prophets, and who, despite their love for it, give away their wealth to their relatives and to orphans and the very poor; and to travellers and beggars and to set slaves free, and who establish the prayer and pay zakat; those who honour their contracts when they make them, and are steadfast in poverty and illness and in battle. Those are the people who are true. They are the people who are godfearing."* (2:176)

Allah says: *"It is the believers who are successful: those who are humble in their prayer; those who turn away from worthless talk; those who pay zakat; those who guard their private parts – except from their wives or those they own as slaves, in which case they are not blameworthy; but those who desire anything more than that are people who have gone beyond the limits – those who honour their trusts and their contracts; those who safeguard their prayer: such people are the inheritors who will inherit Paradise, remaining in it timelessly forever."* (23:1-11)

The following story sheds some light on what the Islamic Message means. After the Mission of the Prophet had begun in Makka and he had started to call people to Islam, Aktham ibn Sayfi sent his son Hubshan to find out about him. His son returned and reported back to him, giving him the information he had obtained about the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. Thereupon he gathered the tribe of Tamim and said to them: "My son spoke face-to-face with this man and has come back to me with his message and his book. He commands what is right and forbids what is wrong and acts impeccably when doing so. He calls people to worship Allah alone, renounce the worship of idols and stop making oaths by the Fire. The men of good sense and judgement amongst you know that there is excellence in doing what he calls to and renouncing what he forbids."

Then he said the following profoundly eloquent words:

"That which Muhammad calls people to, if it had not been a *deen*, would have been something good for people's character."

As Aktham saw it, the Way of Allah is worshipping Allah alone, commanding the right, forbidding the wrong and taking on good character.

When the Muslims emigrated to Abyssinia, Ja'far ibn Abi Talib, may Allah be pleased with him, explained the central message of Islam to the Negus. He said, "O king, we were an uncivilised and ignorant people. We worshipped idols, ate the meat of animals that had died of natural causes, committed indecencies, broke family ties and acted badly towards our neighbours. The strong people among us would devour the weak. We continued to be like that until Allah sent us a Messenger whose lineage, truthfulness, honesty and virtuousness were known to us. He called us to acknowledge the Oneness of Allah and to worship Him, and commanded us to renounce the stones and idols that we and our forefathers had formerly worshipped.

"He commanded us to speak the truth, return things that are held in trust to their owners, maintain the ties of kinship, treat our neighbours well and refrain from committing wrong actions or spilling blood. He forbade us to give false testimony, devour the wealth of orphans and make false accusations of adultery against married people. He also commanded us to worship Allah alone and not attribute partners to Him. He ordered us to perform the prayer and fast." Ja'far enumerated all the commands of Islam to the Negus and then said: "We recognised the truth of his Message and believed in him and followed him in what he had brought from Allah. We worshipped Allah alone and did not attribute partners to Him. We treated as unlawful that which He had made unlawful for us and treated as lawful that which He had made lawful for us. Thereupon our people became hostile towards us and began to torture and torment us in order to make us renounce our *deen* and the worship of Allah and return to the worship of idols. They tried to make us regard as lawful the evil and dirty things we had previously seen as being lawful before becoming Muslim. When they had overwhelmed us, treated us unjustly, made our lives difficult and come between us and our religion, we left and came to your country."

When Ja'far recited to him the first few verses of *Surat Maryam*, the Negus wept and said, "This and that which 'Isa brought have come from the same niche..."

Immediately upon hearing the principles upon which Islam was built, the Negus upheld them, saying: "These principles are true. They are clear signs whose truthfulness is obvious to any person whose nature is pure. I know that what Muhammad has brought has its source in the same spring from which the Message of 'Isa peace be upon him, came."

The Way of Allah, as defined by Ja'far, is recognising the Oneness of Allah and worshipping Him alone, speaking the truth, returning things that are held in trust to their owners, maintaining the ties of kinship, treating neighbours well, refraining from committing wrong actions or spilling blood, establishing the prayer, paying *zakat* and fasting the month of Ramadan. The Way of Allah is avoiding doing things that are indecent, avoiding giving false testimony, devouring the wealth of orphans and falsely accusing married women of adultery.

The First Part of the Pledge of Allegiance

The first part of the pledge of allegiance is the pledge not to associate anything with Allah. When most people hear talk of *shirk* (associating things with Allah), the first thing that occurs to them is that it refers to the concept of polytheism and they see this pledge as being a rejection of that. This concept, which was prevalent amongst the ancient Greeks and the ancient Egyptians (who both made every single major phenomenon that they witnessed in existence into a god), is false. The pre-Islamic Arabs also practised polytheism by making idols their gods.

When mankind first appeared on earth, they affirmed the Oneness of Allah as was confirmed by Adam, peace be upon him. In only a short period of time, however, man deviated from having belief in one God to believing in many gods. In order to guide mankind back to the straight and narrow, the Prophets and Messengers were sent, one after the other. They gave people the good news of the Oneness of Allah and strove to prevent people from worshipping many gods. They tried to put an end to idolatry, which had become the prevalent religion amongst mankind.

There were many, many Prophets and Messengers and the reason why there were so many was the progressive deviation and deterioration of mankind as the ages passed. Every Prophet brought to his people the message of *tawhid* and every Prophet called his people to something similar to that which the Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, called the whole of mankind to – that is: “*Do not worship anyone but Allah! I am a warner and bringer of good news to you from Him.*” (11:2)

Surat Yunus, Surat Hud and many other *suras* in the Qur’an speak of the Messengers calling their peoples to affirming the Oneness of Allah. Allah says: “*We sent Nuh to his people: ‘I am a clear warner to you. Worship none but Allah. I fear for you the punishment of a painful day.’*” (11:25-26) He also says: “*And to ‘Ad We sent their brother Hud. He said, ‘O my people, worship Allah. You have no god apart from Him. You are merely fabricators.’*” (11:50) He also says: “*To Thamud We sent their brother Salih. He said, ‘O my people, worship Allah. You have no god apart from Him. He brought you into being from the earth and made you its inhabitants. So ask His forgiveness and then repent to Him; my Lord is Close and Quick to Respond.’*” (11:60)

Thus we can see that every Prophet told his people not to associate anything with Allah, and called them to worship Allah alone.

The thought that occurs to most people upon hearing the word *shirk*, that it refers to polytheism, is perfectly natural and correct; but that is only one type of *shirk*. This is, however, the type of *shirk* about which Allah says: “*Allah does not forgive anything being associated with Him but He forgives whoever He wills for anything other than that.*” (4:115) It is also the type of *shirk* which Allah disproves logically in saying: “*If there had been any gods besides Allah in heaven or earth, they would both be ruined. Glory be to Allah, Lord of the Throne!*” (21:22) and when He says: “*Allah has no son and there is no other god accompanying Him, for then each god would have gone off with what he created and one of them would have been exalted above the other. Glory be to Allah above what they describe.*” (23:92)

The meaning of the word *tawhid* is not limited to rejecting polytheism, even though that is a significant part of it. The concept of *tawhid* includes many other things.

According to Abu Sa’id al-Kharraz, “Part of the meaning of *tawhid* is for the slave to desire Allah, Exalted and Majestic, in

everything he does and in every movement he makes, inward or outward. He should desire nothing but Allah, giving sway to his intellect and knowledge over his heart and soul, keeping his worries under control and striving for Allah with every inch of his being.”

That is how Imam Abu Sa'id al-Kharraz described absolute pure *tawhid*. Absolute pure *tawhid* is not for show – there can be no showing off in it. Allah says: “*Indeed is the sincere deen not for Allah alone?*” (39:3)

The implicit instruction in the first article of the Islamic pledge of allegiance is for mankind to intend by every action the Face of Allah – and the understanding is that if he does not do so then he receives no reward for his actions and they will not be accepted by Allah. Allah says: “*So let him who hopes to meet his Lord act rightly and not associate anyone in the worship of his Lord.*” (18:105)

The Qur'an, in many places, mentions sincerity and truthfulness, as did the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

Both sincere *tawhid* and *shirk* start with intention. The Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, made it very clear that the value of a person's action and the level of reward that he receives for that action all depend on his intention. He said, “Actions are according to intention (in one variant he said ‘intentions’) and every man has what he intends. If a person makes his emigration for Allah and His Messenger, then his emigration is for Allah and His Messenger. If he makes his emigration for the sake of this world, he will get that, and if he makes his emigration for the sake of a woman, he will marry her. His emigration is for whatever he emigrates for.” (al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, at-Tirmidhi and an-Nasa'i)

If a Muslim's intention is sincere, then everything that follows of his entire affair will be in order. If a person makes a mistake he should strive to rectify that error by repenting and renewing his intention with sincerity. Allah does not accept any action unless it has been made with a sincere intention.

Ad-Dahhak ibn Qays related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: “Allah, may He be exalted, says, ‘I am the best of partners, so whoever associates a

partner with Me, he is for My partner alone.' O people, make your actions sincere, for Allah, blessed is He, does not accept any action unless it is done sincerely for Him alone. Do not say, "This is for Allah and my kin," for it will be for your kin alone and no part of it will be for Allah. And do not say, "This is for Allah and for yourselves", for then it will be for yourselves alone and no part of it will be for Allah." (al-Barraz and al-Bayhaqi)

Abu Umama said, "A man came to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and asked, 'What do you think of a man who fights a battle in order to gain wealth and renown? What does he get?' The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, replied, 'He gets nothing.' The man repeated the question three times, and each time the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, replied 'He gets nothing.' Then he added, 'Allah does not accept any action unless it is performed sincerely and for His Face.'" (Abu Dawud and an-Nasa'i)

The reality is that Islam attaches great importance to sincerity of intention: every act should be performed desiring the Face of Allah. If a man does this, then his heart will be purified and his secret enlightened. If his intention is for Allah alone, then he will never be guilty of false flattery or toadyism and will never do things with falseness or in order to show off.

For that very reason, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, warned very strongly against showing off and doing things purely so that other people can see one do them, and very strongly encouraged people to do things with truthfulness and sincerity.

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, stood alone when his Mission began, calling people to affirm the doctrine of Oneness in all its aspects. He openly called people to Truth in the face of Falseness, called people to Allah in the midst of a society wholly built upon *shirk*, and called on people to destroy idols whilst in the midst of a people who worshipped them. His call and message were to the entire world and were based on the doctrine of Unity (*tawhid*).

Islam is the religion of *tawhid*. *Tawhid* is believing with sincerity and certainty that the One who is in absolute control of exis-

tence and the One who is free to act in it in any way He wills is Allah, glory be to Him. It is believing that even if all of the people in the heavens and the earth were to gather together in order to help a human being in any way, they would not have availed him of anything unless Allah had decreed that for him; and believing that even if all of the people in the heavens and the earth were to gather together in order to harm a man in any way, they would not be able to harm him unless Allah decreed that for him.

If that is how things are – and there is no doubt that it is so – then what it means is that it is impossible for the heart of a believer to contain both sincere belief in Allah and fear of anything other than Allah at the same time. *Tawhid* is the path of Allah and the first article in the Islamic pledge of allegiance, for the corollary of not associating anything with Allah is having *tawhid*.

Although we have gone into some depth concerning the topic of *tawhid*, we have not become bored of mentioning it, and indeed are not afraid to repeat some of the things we have already said, because we feel the subject merits repetition in order that its significance become firmly embedded in the heart of the reader.

Allah says: *"This is My Path and it is straight, so follow it. Do not follow other ways or you will become cut off from His Way. That is what He instructs you to do, so that perhaps you may be godfearing."* (6:154)

The foundation and essence of the Path of Allah, which is limited neither by time nor by place, is *tawhid* and, for that reason, *tawhid* was at the core of the call of every Prophet and Messenger. Allah says: *"And to 'Ad We sent their brother Hud. He said, 'My people, worship Allah! You have no god apart from Him.'" (11:50)* And He says: *"To Thamud We sent their brother Salih. He said, 'My people, worship Allah! You have no god apart from Him.'" (11:60)*

Allah, glory be to Him, makes this rule general and all-inclusive. He says: *"We sent no Messenger before you without revealing to him: 'There is no god but Me, so worship Me.'" (21:25)* That was the way of *tawhid*: the mission of all Prophets and Messengers without exception.

The *tawhid* which is the essence of all the Messengers is that *tawhid* which is all-comprehensive – in other words, affirming the Oneness of Allah in terms of Godhood, affirming the Oneness of Allah in terms of Lordship and affirming the Oneness of Allah in

terms of His having control over everything, big or small. Allah says: "Say, 'O Allah, Master of the Kingdom, You give sovereignty to whoever You will and You take sovereignty from whoever You will. You exalt whoever You will and You abase whoever You will. All good is in Your hands. You have power over all things.'" (3:26)

It is not feasible for a person to ask for help from any other than Allah, as Allah is the Master of the Kingdom. The maxim of every true believer is "*You alone we worship and You alone we ask for help.*" (1:4) Their maxim is, "If you ask, ask Allah; and if you seek help, seek help from Allah. Know that if the whole community had come together in order to benefit you in any way, they would not avail you of anything unless Allah had destined that for you; and if they had come together in order to harm you in any way, they would not do any harm to you unless Allah had destined that for you." (From the *hadith* of Ibn 'Abbas related by at-Tirmidhi)

Al-Qushayri explained this further when he said, "Allah, Exalted is He, makes His slaves have no need of one another, because in reality everything we need is with Allah. Indeed, a created being cannot bring benefit or harm to himself, so how could he bring them to others?"

That is the source of the saying 'Creation attaches itself to creation, and prisoners attach themselves to other prisoners' and the saying that 'If a person raises his need to Allah but then goes back on that and tries to get help from anyone other than Him, Allah will try him by making him need other created beings and then removing the mercy from their hearts so they do not help him.'

The true meaning of *tawhid*, in its ultimate form, is for a person to put on the halter by which he is led in absolute submission to Allah, glory be to Him, and for him to turn his face to Allah with true sincerity and without any hint of showing off.

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was asked about faith. He replied, "It is true sincerity. Allah says: "*Indeed is the sincere deed not for Allah alone?*" (39:3). Every action which is not performed with true sincerity for His Face goes unrewarded and is not accepted (by Allah)."

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, made it clear that showing off, regardless of the form that it takes, is *shirk* and strips any good action of all its reward. He said,

may Allah bless him and grant him peace, "The thing that I fear most for my community is the lesser *shirk*." They asked, "What is the lesser *shirk*, Messenger of Allah?" "Showing off (doing things so that others see you doing them)," he replied. "Allah will say, when He compensates people for their actions, 'Go to those to whom you used to show off in this world, and see whether they have any reward for you.'"

Showing off can assume various forms, many of which the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, warned his community against. For example, he said, "If a person fasts in order to show off, he has committed *shirk*; if he prays in order to show off, he has committed *shirk*; and if he gives alms in order to show off, he has committed *shirk*." (al-Bayhaqi)

Whenever a person performs an action without desiring Allah's Face by that action, he has committed *shirk* and will receive no reward. He has done something that goes against the doctrine of *tawhid*. The criterion by which all actions are assessed is the intention, as is related in the famous *hadith* mentioned previously in this chapter: "Actions are according to intentions...".

"Guide us on the Straight Path"

Allah says in *Surat al-Fatiba*: "Guide us on the Straight Path, the Path of those You have blessed, not that of those with anger on them, nor of the misguided." (1:5-7). The 'Straight Path' is the Path of Allah, which finds its form in His Mighty Qur'an and on the tongue of His Noble Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. Allah, glory be to Him, describes His Path as a method and a means; as principles and rules; and as goals and aims.

When we read these verses (*al-Fatiba*), we turn to Allah and call upon Him to guide us to His Straight Path, for no one guides to that path except for Him. Allah says in a *hadith qudsi*, "My slaves, every one of you is astray except for him whom I have guided, so ask Me for guidance and I will guide you."

Guidance is from Allah alone. If Allah guides a person then no one can mislead him. If Allah misleads a person then no one can guide him. If Allah guides a person to the Straight Path then he has obtained the blessing that Allah desires mankind to have.

The Straight Path is true faith: classical faith. In other words, the Straight Path is faith, which is governed totally by divine teachings that are submitted to with contentment and without question. Allah says: *"No, by your Lord, they are not believers until they make you their judge in the disputes that break out between them, and then find no resistance within themselves to what you decide and submit themselves completely."* (4:64)

A believer does not truly believe until he has made the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, his arbiter in matters of faith, in matters of conduct and in his legal affairs. He does not truly believe until he accepts this with tranquility and happiness and without reserve.

Allah, glory be to Him, describes what a true believer is when He says: *"The believers are only those who have believed in Allah and His Messenger and then have had no doubt and have done jihad with their wealth and themselves in the Way of Allah. They are the ones who are true to their word."* (49:15)

This description of the believers includes both inner and outer aspects. Having faith in your heart and no doubt in your soul means that faith will demonstrate itself through your limbs by your performing *jihad* in the Way of Allah in both its forms: *jihad* with your self and *jihad* with your wealth and everything that you possess. This noble verse is considered to be the most accurate yardstick by which a person can measure the level of his faith.

The Straight Path ultimately leads to Allah, and that is the final destination of anyone following that path. This is confirmed by Allah when He says that *"the ultimate end is with your Lord."* (53:41) There is no other ultimate end for a believer.

The journey to Allah begins with sincere repentance: that is the first step on the Straight Path. Allah, glory be to Him, says: *"Turn to Allah, every one of you, O believers, so that perhaps you may have success."* (24:31) And He says in a *hadith qudsi*, "My slaves, you commit sin by day and by night, but I forgive all sins, so ask Me for forgiveness and I will forgive you." (Muslim)

Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "By Allah, I ask Allah for forgiveness and repent more than seventy times each day." (al-Bukhari)

Allah outlines the steps that believers must take in the course of their journey to Allah. He says: "*Those who repent, those who worship, those who praise, those who fast, those who bow, those who prostrate, those who command the right, those who forbid what is wrong, those who preserve the limits of Allah.*" (9:113) Then he seals His description of the believers by saying: "*Give good news to the believers.*" (9:113)

Allah's Words "*Give good news to the believers*" are not limited in any way; the glad tidings are absolute. The good news from Allah to the believers is that they have found salvation, and that they will have success in this World and in the Next.

A Summary of the meaning of *Tawhid* or '*You alone we worship and You alone we ask for help*'

Allah, glory be to Him, says in *Surat al-Fatiha*: "*You alone we worship and You alone we ask for help.*" (1:4)

Imam Ibn Kathir related that a person from one of the first generations said, "The *Fatiha* is the secret of the Qur'an, and the secret of the *Fatiha* is the verse "*You Alone we worship and You Alone we ask for help.*" The first part of the verse – '*You alone we worship*' – is washing one's hands of *shirk*, and the second part of the verses – '*You alone we ask for help*' – is admitting that one has no strength or power and handing over control of one's destiny to Allah. That is the meaning that many verses of the Qur'an confirm, such as Allah's Words "*So worship Him and put your trust in Him.*" (11:121)

In fact, it is worth mentioning the full context of these Words to understand the justification for them. Allah says: "*The Unseen of the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah and the whole affair is returned to Him. So worship Him and put your trust in Him. Your Lord is not unaware of what you do.*" (11:121)

Allah addresses His Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, saying: "Say: '*He is the All-Merciful. We believe in Him and trust in Him.*'" (67:29) And He says: "*Lord of the East and West – there is no god but Him, so take Him as your Guardian.*" (73:8)

There is no doubt that the obvious meaning of the verse "*You alone we worship and You alone we ask for help*" is that it is obligatory

for all to worship Allah alone with true sincerity, and that it is obligatory for them to only seek help from Allah and no one else. The Qur'an makes it clear that it is Allah alone who can do whatever He wills in existence, and that He has absolute control over the both great and small things: "*Say, 'O Allah, Master of the Kingdom, You give sovereignty to whomever You will and You take sovereignty from whomever You will. You exalt whomever You will and You abase whomever You will. All good is in Your Hands. You have power over all things.'*" (3:26). Just as Allah has sovereignty over the heavens and the earth and prevents them from disappearing and "*if they were to vanish no one else could then keep hold of them*", He also has sovereignty over the small details of everything in the entire world. He has sovereignty over sight and hearing just as He has sovereignty over the organs of sight and hearing, namely the eyes and the ears. The health of a healthy body belongs to Him, as does the renown of every famous person. If Allah were to will it, He could make all of these things disappear and prevent them from coming back.

Allah's Words "*The whole affair is returned to Him*" (11:121) are general in scope and all-comprehensive, and so what this means is that worship should be for Him alone and help should be sought from no one else. Allah describes for us the productive means by which His help should be sought: He explains that it is done by worshipping Him alone with true sincerity. If a person wants Allah to grant him success, make things easy for him, give him help and, indeed, respond to him in any way, then he should make his worship of Allah sound, for '*You alone we worship*' is the means to achieve the second part of the verse, '*You alone we ask for help*'.

Allah says in a *hadith qudsi*, "If a person shows hostility to one of My friends, then I will declare war upon him. My slave does not come near to Me by doing anything more beloved to Me than carrying out the things I have made obligatory on him. My slave continues to come closer to Me by performing supererogatory actions until I love him. When I love him, I become the hearing with which he hears, the sight with which he sees, the hand with which he strikes and the foot with which he walks. If he were to ask Me for anything, I would give it to him, and if he were to seek refuge in Me, I would give him refuge." (al-Bukhari)

This *badith* makes it abundantly clear that the most beloved thing that a person can do in order to get closer to Allah is to carry out the ordinances of the *deen*, and that the way to get closer still and acquire to Allah's love is to do many supererogatory acts. The final thing we understand from this *badith* is that if a person has reached a station in which Allah loves him then Allah will grant him success and guidance, make things easy for him respond to him when asked and give him refuge if he requests it.

The verse "*You alone we worship and You alone we ask for help*" describes the station of the friends of Allah and their *raison d'être*. Allah says: "*Yes, the friends of Allah will feel no fear and will know no sorrow: those who believe and are godfearing, there is good news for them in the life of this world and in the Next World. There is no changing the words of Allah. That is the great victory!*" (10:62-64)

Another way of describing *tawhid* is by saying that it is 'taking refuge in Allah and seeking His aid in both small and great matters'. Allah says: "*O Mankind. you are the poor, in need of Allah, whereas Allah is the Rich Beyond Need, the Praiseworthy.*" (35:15)

One of the most beautiful commentaries on this noble verse is the following *badith qudsi* related by Abu Idris al-Khawlani (who would fall onto his knees and kneel every time he read out this *badith*, because of the immense respect and awe he felt for it). He said, "The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, related that Allah, Blessed and Exalted is He, says:

"My slaves, I have made injustice unlawful for Myself and have made it unlawful amongst yourselves, so do not treat one another unjustly. My slaves, all of you are astray except for those whom I guide, so ask Me for guidance and I will guide you. My slaves, all of you are hungry except for those whom I feed, so ask Me for food and I will feed you. My slaves, all of you are naked except for those whom I clothe, so ask Me for clothes and I will clothe you. My slaves, you commit sin by day and night, but I forgive all sins, so ask Me for forgiveness and I will forgive you. My slaves, you will never attain to My harm so as to be able to harm Me, and will never attain to My benefit so as to be able to benefit Me. My slaves, if the first of you and last of you, all the men and all the *jinn* amongst you were to possess the heart of the most god-fearing man amongst you, that would not increase My kingdom in any

way. My slaves, if the first of you and last of you, all the men and all the *jinn* amongst you were to possess the heart of the most evil man amongst you, that would not decrease My kingdom in any way. My slaves, if the first of you and last of you, all the men and all the *jinn* amongst you were to stand in a single place and ask of Me, I could give every man what he asks for without that decreasing what I have any more than the amount that the sea decreases when a needle is thrown into it. My slaves, it is your actions for which I call you to account, and then repay you for them in full. If any of you finds good he should praise Allah; and any of you who finds other than that should blame no one but himself." (Muslim)

There is no doubt whatsoever that man has need of Allah in every circumstance. He has absolute need of Allah in material matters. Allah says: "*Man has only to look at his food. We pour down plentiful water; then split the earth into furrows. Then We make grain grow in it, and grapes and herbs and olives and dates and luxuriant gardens and orchards and meadows for you and your livestock to enjoy.*" (80: 24-32)

He also says: "*Have you thought about what you cultivate? Is it you who make it germinate or are We the Germinator? If We wished We could have made it broken stubble.*" (56:66-68)

He also says: "*Have you thought about the water that you drink? Is it you who sent it down from the clouds or are We the Sender? If We wished We could have made it bitter; so will you not give thanks?*" (56:71-73)

Man also has absolute need of Allah in non-material matters, such as spiritual guidance. We repeat the following verses from the *Fatiba* many times each day: "*Guide us on the Straight Path, the Path of those You have blessed, not of those with anger on them, nor of the misguided.*" (1:5-7). Those whom Allah has blessed are those who have followed His guidance, acted by it and adhered to it. The guidance of Allah is what may be found within the Noble Qur'an and the *Sunna* of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

According to the author of *Kitab at-Tabbir*: "There are two sorts of people whom Allah enriches. The first sort are those Allah makes rich by making their wealth and money grow: they are the generality of people. That is metaphorical wealth. The second sort

are those Allah makes rich by purifying their hearts: these are the elite. That is real wealth, because creation has greater need of the aspiration of those who have this state than a portion of the wealth of those who are materially wealthy.

The Messenger, peace be upon him, and *Tawhid*

The first article of the pledge of allegiance was practised by the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in a way that is loved by Allah and His Messenger. Shaykh ad-Dajwi had some valuable things to say about this matter. His article sheds light on the reality of the *tawhid* of the Messenger of *tawhid*. He says, may Allah have mercy on him:

“If a person were to study the states of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, he would find him to be perpetually drowning in the sea of *tawhid*. His fear of Allah and his careful awareness of Him had become mingled with his flesh and blood. His state was so exalted that it was impossible for him to be someone whose appetites ruled him or who was surrounded by darkness. If you happen to be a person of good sense, and take it upon yourself to look carefully at his states, peace be upon him, you will find that he was a man who turned to Allah in absolutely everything, for that was the way of the Prophets and Messengers.

“If something happened to him that he liked, he would say, ‘Praise belongs to Allah Who perfects good works with His Blessing.’

If something happened to him that he disliked, he would say, ‘Praise belongs to Allah in every circumstance.’

If he wanted something, he would say, ‘O Allah, give me the choice and choose for me.’

If he wanted to travel, he would say, ‘O Allah, I set out with Your permission [i.e. start a journey] and travel by Your leave.’

If he wanted to sleep, he would say, ‘O Allah, in Your Name I lay my side down and in Your Name, I raise it.’

If he woke up, he would say, ‘Praise belongs to Allah Who gave us life after taking our souls and to Whom we will be raised up.’

If he put on new clothes, he would say, 'Praise belongs to Allah Who provides me with that which I adorn myself throughout my life.'

If he drank something, he would say, 'Praise belongs to Allah Who, by His mercy, made water sweet and pleasant and did not make it salty and bitter on account of our sins.'

If he broke his fast, he would say, 'Praise belongs to Allah Who gave me help so that I could fast and gave me provision so that I could break my fast.'

If he turned over in his bed during the night, he would say, 'There is no god but Allah, the One, the Overwhelming; the Lord of the heavens and the earth and what is between them; the All-Mighty, the All-Forgiving.'

If he woke up from his sleep during the night, he would say, 'My Lord, forgive me, have mercy on me and guide me to the Straightest Way.'

If he feared any people, he would say, 'O Allah, we place You upon our necks and seek refuge in You from their evil.'

If he left his house, he would say, 'In the Name of Allah; I have put my trust in Allah; there is no power and no strength except by Allah. O Allah, I seek refuge in You from leading astray or being led astray; from humiliating or being humiliated; from treating others unjustly or being treated unjustly; and from being foolish or having others do foolish things to me.'

If he saw a new moon, he would say, 'New moon of goodness right guidance, I believe in the One Who created you.'

If he raised his glance to the sky, he would say, 'O You Who have control over hearts, make my heart obedient to You.'

If he made an oath, he would say, 'By the One Who has the soul of Muhammad in His Hand.'

If the wind grew blustery, he would say, 'O Allah, I ask You for the good of it, the good of what is in it and the good of what it has been sent with; and I seek refuge in You from the evil of it, the evil of what is in it and the evil of what it has been sent with.'"

That is how the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was in absolutely everything he did. He was immersed in contemplation of Allah, seeking help from Allah and taking refuge in Allah. He saw that nothing possessed power or strength except

Allah and therefore, every time he felt distress he would say: "The Creator is enough for me against created beings, and the Provider is enough for me against those who are provided for. He Who is enough for me is enough for me. Allah is enough for me and is the Best of Guardians."

***Tawhid* and moral courage**

Tawhid is the primary foundation upon which moral courage and most other excellent characteristics are built. In order to make moral courage firm in the heart of the believer, Allah gives us forewarning of the things that cause a man to shrink from speaking the truth. These things can in the end be reduced to two matters:

The first of these two things is what could be described as 'anxiety about provision' or 'fear of poverty'. Allah makes it clear to us in the Noble Qur'an that a person's provision is already decided and decreed; and that you will only get what is destined for you and will never obtain what is destined for others. He says: "*Your provision is in heaven – and what you are promised. By the Lord of heaven and earth, it is certainly the truth, just as you have speech.*" (51:22-23) He also says: "*There is no creature on the earth that is not dependent upon Allah for its provision. He knows where it lives and where it dies. They are all in a Clear Book.*" (11:6)

We know that it is a fact that Islam encourages people to work to obtain their provision and that gold and silver do not rain down from the sky; for the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "It is better for you to take up your rope, go up to the mountain early in the morning, gather up firewood, sell it and eat and give alms from the money which you earn from doing that than for you to beg for money from other people." (al-Bukhari, Muslim and an-Nasa'i) He also said, "The upper hand is better than the lower hand (i.e. the giver is better than the one who receives)." (Ahmad and at-Tabarani)

However, we also know at the same time that provision is in the Hands of Allah and that no one, no matter how great his power or influence, can prevent provision reaching the person for whom it is intended. Allah has command over all affairs and He is the Strong, the All-Mighty and the Overwhelming.

The second of these two things is the fear of death. There is no place for this fear in the heart of the human being because Allah has already preordained the time when each of us will die. Even if people were to fortify themselves within lofty towers, those for whom being killed had been decreed would have gone out to their place of death: *"When their time comes, they cannot delay it a single hour or bring it forward."* (7:32) Both a person's appointed time and his provision are in the Hands of Allah. Every thought, opinion or fear that goes against that fact is a form of *shirk*.

The following story is a great example of the moral courage that Qur'anic teachings engender. A man stood up in the presence of the Caliph Sulayman ibn 'Abdi'l-Malik and told him, "I shall say to you what others do not dare to say so that what is Allahright may be fulfilled. You are surrounded by men who have made poor decisions for themselves and have sold their religion for the worldly possessions you can give them. In their attempts to acquire your pleasure, they have obtained the displeasure of Allah. They fear you when performing things for Allah, but do not fear Allah in their interactions with you. They are at war with the Next World and at peace with this world. Do not trust them in the matter which Allah has entrusted to you, for they only bring waste to that which has been placed in trust, and darkness and disgrace to the Community. You are answerable for any crimes they commit, but they bear no responsibility for any crimes you commit. Do not spoil your own Afterlife so that they may thrive and prosper in this world, for the most stupid person in the eyes of Allah is he who exchanges his own Afterlife for another person's life in this world."

Just as the morally courageous man speaks the truth, he also accepts it when he hears it. If a person is sincere in his intention then his actions are also characterised by true sincerity and trust in Allah. Islam attaches immense importance to true sincerity – to such a degree that when a man once asked the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, "What is faith?" he replied, "True sincerity."

Mu'adh ibn Jabal, may Allah be pleased with him, said, after being instructed to go to the Yemen, "Messenger of Allah, advise me." The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, told

him, "If you have true sincerity in your *deen*, then a small amount of action will be enough for you."

If a person possesses true sincerity then Allah will accept his actions and will reward them – and, indeed, his actions are the means by which he achieves salvation in both this world and the Next.

Ibn 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him and his father, related that he heard the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, say: "Before your time, there were three men who set out from their homes one day. The onset of nightfall forced them to seek refuge in a cave. After they had made their way inside, a rock fell from the mountainside and sealed the mouth of the cave, locking them in. They said to each other, 'We cannot free ourselves from this cave unless we call on Allah to save us by mentioning right actions that we have performed.'

One of the men said, 'O Allah, My parents were very old and I used to make sure that every evening I gave them a bowl of milk to drink before anyone else, including my own family and myself. One day, my search for a tree caused me to travel a long way from them and I did not return until after they had fallen asleep. I obtained the evening milk for them and went to them, but found them asleep. I did not want anyone else to drink before them, so I remained there with the bowl in my hand and the children crying out from hunger by my feet, waiting for them to wake up until daybreak arrived. Then they woke up and drank their milk. O Allah, if I performed this action out of desire for Your Face, then give us relief from this rock.' The rock opened up slightly, but not enough to allow them to get out.

Another man said, 'O Allah, I had a cousin whom I loved more than anyone else. I wanted her for myself, but she continued to refuse my advances until one time a severe drought almost destroyed her livelihood. She came to me asking for help and I gave her one hundred and twenty dinars on the condition that she would spend some time alone with me. When I was about to have my way with her, she said to me, "Is it lawful for you to break a seal without due right? (i.e. it is not lawful for you to break my virginity)." When she said that, I feared the sin I had been about to commit and let her be, even though she was the person I loved

more than anyone else. I did, however, leave her the money that I had given her. O Allah, if I performed this action out of desire for Your Face, then give us relief from this rock.' The rock moved slightly, but they were still unable to get out.

The third man said, 'O Allah, on one occasion I hired some workers. When they finished, I gave them all their wages except for a single man who had gone and not collected what was due to him. I invested his wages for him and my investments were very profitable and his money multiplied many times over. Then, after a long time had passed, the man came back and asked me to give him his wages. I told him, "Everything that you see – the camels, cows, sheep and slaves – they are all part of your wages." He said to me, "Do not make fun of me." I replied that I was not making fun of him; and he took everything that I had pointed to and led all away, leaving nothing behind. O Allah, if I performed this action out of desire for Your Face, then give us relief from this rock.' The rock moved a little more and they were able to walk out of the cave." (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

An action that Allah accepts, stipulating that it be accompanied by a sincere intention, is one that is performed within a divine framework: It is an action that a man performs in compliance with the teaching of the One Who teaches: Allah, in the full knowledge that his compliance is the fulfilment of a divine order (if it is a positive matter) and the avoidance of a divine prohibition (if it is a negative matter). In other words, it is the action that puts into practice, in both positive and negative matters, the Qur'anic Command in the verse "*Read: In the Name of your Lord Who Created.*" (96:1)

This action – in both practical and theoretical terms, and when it comes to both big and small things – is none other than that which was brought by the Divine Revelation and expounded by the life of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. If a matter occurs outside this framework: in other words, if the intention is not sincere and the act is not in obedience to Allah, then that matter can no longer be considered as 'reading in the Name of your Lord'.

The pledge of allegiance that is required in Islam is to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

Allah says: "*Those who pledge you their allegiance pledge allegiance to none but Allah.*" (48:10) He says: "*Whoever obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah.*" (4:79)

The Noble Qur'an, therefore, and the speech and actions of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, together represent a single unit, which is Islam.

Another of the articles of the pledge of allegiance is that signified by Allah's Words "they do not disobey you in what is *ma'ruf* (60:12). '*Ma'ruf*' is the goodness that is concealed within the divine teachings and includes every type of good thing. If the *ma'ruf* is put into practice within a society then moral excellence becomes the norm of that society.

There are numerous texts concerning the Islamic pledge of allegiance, a short selection we have included below.

'Ubada ibn as-Samit said: "We pledged allegiance to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, on the basis that we would hear and obey in difficulty and ease and in things that we liked and things that we disliked. We pledged that we would not dispute with people in authority, and that we would speak and establish the truth wherever we were without worrying about the criticism of any criticiser." (Malik, al-Bukhari, Muslim)

Jabir, may Allah be pleased with him, reported:

"The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, spent ten years in Makka approaching the pilgrims at their halting places in 'Ukaz and Majanna during the time of the pilgrimage. He asked them to protect and help him so that he could convey the Message of his Lord to the people; and in return he offered them Paradise. However, he was unable to find a single person to protect or help him. It became so extreme that whenever anyone set out from Yemen or Egypt in order to come to Makka, his people and relatives would come to him and warn him about being beguiled by the young man of Makka. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, would walk amongst them and they would point at him with their fingers. This state of affairs continued until

Allah sent us to him from Yathrib. We protected him and affirmed that he had come with the truth. Men from amongst us would believe in him and recite the Qur'an with him, and then return to their homes and families, who would become Muslim with him. This continued until no house of the Ansar remained except where Muslims were not openly practising their Islam.

Then they all began to plot against the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. So we said to ourselves, 'How long are we going to leave the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, wandering around in a state of exile and fear in the mountains of Makka?'

Thereupon seventy men from amongst us set out to see him. We came to him during the season of the *Hajj* pilgrimage and arranged to meet him in the gorge of 'Aqaba. We went there, one or two men at time, until we had all gathered there and then we said, 'Messenger of Allah, on what basis shall we pledge allegiance to you?'

He said, 'You should pledge allegiance to me on the basis that you will hear and obey in times of both activity and idleness; that you will spend in the way of Allah in poverty and wealth; that you will enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong; that you will speak of Allah and not fear the criticism of any criticiser; and that you will help me and protect me if I come to you (in Yathrib) in the same way that you protect yourselves, your wives and your children. If you do all these things, then you will go to Paradise.'

We went up to him to pledge allegiance to him and As'ad ibn Zurara took him by the hand – and apart from myself, he was the youngest of the seventy – and said, 'Gently, people of Yathrib! We have only beaten the flanks of our camels in order to get here quickly because we knew that he was the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. If we bring out the Messenger, peace be upon him, it will mean that we will be at war with all the Arabs, that the best of you will be killed, and

that swords will bite into your flesh. Either you are people who will bear all of this calmly, take your pledge of allegiance to him and receive your reward from Allah, or you are a people who fear for your own safety and will leave him. If that is who you are, then be clear about it so that you may have a better excuse before Allah.'

They said, 'Step back, As'ad, for by Allah, we will not abandon this pledge and we will never go back on it.' We went up to him and pledged allegiance to him, and he stipulated his conditions and promised us Paradise if we fulfilled them."

'Asim ibn 'Umar ibn Qatada informed me that when the people gathered together to pledge allegiance to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, al-'Abbas ibn 'Ubadah ibn Nadla al-Ansari, the brother of the sons of Salim ibn 'Awf, said, "Tribe of Khazraj, do you know the basis on which we have pledged allegiance to this man?" They replied that they did.

He said, "You have pledged allegiance on the basis that you will be at war with all people, whoever they are. If you think that, if your money starts to run out and your noblemen begin to be killed, you will surrender to the Quraysh, then say so now. For, if you were to do such a thing, you would be humiliated in this world and the Next. If, however, you think that you will be able to fulfil what he has called upon you to do, despite the fact that your wealth might be exhausted and your noblemen killed, then take it on, for it will be good for you in this world and the Next."

They said, "We will take the pledge on the basis that our wealth will be plundered and our nobles killed. But what will we get for that, Messenger of Allah, if we do it?"

He replied, "You will have Paradise."

They said, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched out his hand and they took the oath of allegiance.

Al-'Abbas ibn 'Abdi'l-Muttalib, may Allah be pleased with him, related that he heard the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, say, "Whoever is content with Allah as Lord, Islam as *deen* and Muhammad as Messenger will have tasted the flavour of faith."

Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was standing amongst the people when Jibril came to him and asked, 'What is faith?' The Prophet, peace be upon him, replied, 'Faith is to believe in Allah, His angels and Messengers, to believe that we will meet Him and to believe in the Resurrection.'

"What is Islam?" he asked. The Prophet, peace be upon him, replied, 'Islam is to worship Allah and not associate anything with Him, and to establish the prayer, pay the obligatory *zakat* and fast 'Ramadan.

"What is *Ihsan*?" he asked. The Prophet, peace be upon him, replied, '*Ihsan* is to worship Allah as if you could see Him, for if you cannot see Him, He can certainly see you.'

"When is the Last Day?" he asked. The Prophet, peace be upon him, replied: 'The one who has been asked is no more knowledgeable about that than the one who asks, but I will tell you about its signs. It will happen when the slave girl gives birth to her mistress, and camel herders seek to outdo one another in the construction of tall buildings (there were five signs mentioned but Allah knows what they are).' Then the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, recited '*Truly Allah has knowledge of the Hour; sends down abundant rain; and knows what is in the womb. And no soul knows what it will earn tomorrow and no soul knows in what land it will die.*' (31:33)

"Then Jibril turned and went away. The Prophet said, "'Bring him back to me.' We searched for him but could see no sign of anyone. Then the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'That was Jibril who came to teach people their *deen*.'"

Abu 'Abdullah said, "He made all of that part of faith."

Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: "Faith has more than seventy branches or 'more than sixty branches.' The best of them is for a person to say 'There is no god but Allah' and the least is for a person to remove something harmful from the road. Bashfulness is one of the branches of faith." (Muslim, Abu Dawud, an-Nasa'i and Ibn Majah)

Sufyan ibn 'Abdullah ath-Thaqafi related that he said, "Messenger of Allah, tell me something I can say about Islam that I will

not have to ask anyone about after you (in another variant he said 'other than you')." He, peace be upon him, said, "Say 'I believe in Allah' and then go straight." (Muslim, Ahmad, at-Tirmidhi, an-Nasa'i and Ibn Majah)

Allah says: "Say, 'O People of the Book, come to a proposition which is the same for us and you – that we should worship none but Allah and not associate any partners with Him and not take one another as lords besides Allah.' If they turn away, say, 'Bear witness that we are Muslims.'" (3:63)

Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "By the One Who has the soul of Muhammad in His Hand, you will not enter the Garden until you believe and you will not believe until you love one another. Should I not tell you of something that, if you were to do it, you would love one another? Spread the the greeting '*as-salam 'alaykum*' amongst yourselves."

Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "A fornicator is not a believer at the time that he is fornicating; a thief is not a believer at the time that he is stealing; and a person who drinks wine is not a believer at the time that he is drinking wine" (al-Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad and an-Nasa'i)

Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, related that Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Keep away from seven great sins." They asked, "Messenger of Allah, what are they?" He said, "Associating others with Allah, magic, killing a soul that Allah has forbidden to be killed except by right, devouring usury, running away at the time when armies clash, and falsely accusing women of adultery who are chaste, but who are heedless and yet believe." (al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud and An-Nasa'i)

'Abdu'rRahman ibn Abi Bakra related that his father mentioned that on one occasion the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was sitting on his camel while another man held it by its reins. He, peace be upon him, asked, "What day is it today?" We remained silent for so long that we thought that he would call it something other than the name by which we knew it. Then he said, "Is this not the Day of Sacrifice?" We replied that it

was. Then he said, "What month is this?" We remained silent for so long that we thought that he would call it something other than the name by which we knew it. Then he said, "Is this not the month of Dhu'l-Hijja?" We confirmed that it was. Then he said, "Your blood, your wealth and your dignity are just as sacrosanct as this day in this month in this land of yours. It is incumbent upon each of you present today to inform those who are absent, for one who is absent may benefit more from this advice than one who is present." (Muslim, Abu Dawud and an-Nasa'i)

Chapter 6

The *Hijra* (Emigration)

How majestic, permanent and strong is faith! We rarely find in the annals of history the occurrence of an emigration made purely for the sake of Allah and His Messenger to a destination that was largely unknown to the émigré, for the emigrant did not know whether the people of his chosen destination would treat him with kindness and friendliness, or with roughness and enmity. In most parts of history, emigration for the sake of belief is almost nonexistent: the exception to this is within the history of Islam.

the number of Muslims in Makka increased and they became more and more open about their faith, many of the unbelievers of the Quraysh rose up against members of their tribes who believed in Allah and His Messenger and began to torture and imprison them in an attempt to make them abandon their *deen*. The believers endured many different kinds of torture for the sake of Allah.

This state of affairs continued and showed no signs of abating and so the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said to them out of his compassion and pity for them, "Spread out across the earth."

They asked him, "Where should we go, Messenger of Allah?" He indicated that they should go to Abyssinia; so, a group of believers emigrated there at the very beginning of the Islamic period. Some of them travelled with their families, some of them alone. When they arrived, they were able to worship Allah in tranquillity and to go about their affairs in safety without fear of torture or coercion. After some time had passed, some of them decided to return to Makka, thinking that the problems between the Messenger of Allah and the idolaters had subsided. When they got back they found the situation even worse, and their own families, among others, pounced upon them and inflicted upon them much harm and injury.

The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, gave them permission to emigrate to Abyssinia a second time, but their second emigration was much harder than the first because of the extreme violence directed against them by the Quraysh. 'Uthman ibn 'Affan, may Allah be pleased with him, came to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and addressed him, saying, "Messenger of Allah, this is our second emigration to Abyssinia. Will you not come with us?"

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, then said, "You are the emigrants to Allah and to me: these two emigrations are for all of you."

'Uthman, may Allah be pleased with him, "That is enough for us, Messenger of Allah."

Eighty-three men and eighteen women took part in the second emigration. Quraysh, however, were not content to leave these emigrants worshipping Allah in safety and peace and it did not please them that they had escaped from the torture that they had been subjected to, so they sent a delegation of the cleverest of their leaders to the Negus, laden with gifts. The purpose of this delegation was to bring the Muslims back to Makka so that they could be tortured once again. Allah says: "*They plotted and Allah plotted, but Allah is the Best of Plotters.*" (3:53)

The delegation was unsuccessful, however, and they went back to Makka empty-handed. This greatly riled the Quraysh and their anger grew. They then decided upon an action that went beyond the bounds of human decency. They wrote a letter in which the citizens of the Quraysh formally pledged that they would not marry into the Banu Hashim (the family of the Prophet), that they would have no business dealings with them, and that they would not interact with them in any way. They hung the letter up in the Ka'ba. The man who penned this letter was Mansur ibn 'Ikrima al-'Abdari and, by the Decree of Allah, his arm become paralysed.

The Quraysh used this letter as their pretext to place an embargo upon Banu Hashim. The embargo began at the beginning of Muharram in the seventh year of the Prophetic mission, and the Banu Hashim remained blockaded and cut off from the remainder of the tribe of Quraysh for the next three years. They would not go out except during the time of *Hajj* and they were

brought to the limits of their endurance: the Quraysh would hear the sounds of their babies screaming with hunger but that did not soften their hearts or move them in the slightest way.

While these things were going on in full sight and hearing of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, the Quraysh would send people to him to offer him wealth, sovereignty, fame and the pleasures of this world if he would only abandon his call to Islam. Their efforts, however, were completely in vain and they did not achieve their aim, for the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, did not abandon his call even for a moment – he would call to Islam both during the day and during the night.

Rabi'a ibn 'Ibad, who was not a Muslim at the time of this *hadith* but became Muslim later, said, "I saw the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, with my own eyes at the Dhu'l-Majaz market, saying, 'People, say "There is no god but Allah" and you will have success.' He was walking through the narrow streets of the Dhu'l-Majaz market. and the people were crowding around him to hear him. As far as I could see, not one of them said a word, but he did not stop repeating, 'People, say "There is no god but Allah" and you will have success.'" (Ahmad)

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, spent the first three years of his mission in Makka keeping his Prophethood secret and then, in its fourth year, announced it to the people and began to call them to Islam for the next ten years. Every year, during the time of the *Hajj*, he would approach the pilgrims at their halting places in 'Ukaz, Majanna and Dhu'l-Majaz, asking them to protect him so that he could be free to convey the Message of his Lord, and in return they would be granted Paradise. However, he was unable to find a single tribe prepared to help him or respond to his call. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, would ask about each tribe and their halting place and then go to them and say, "People, if you say 'There is no god but Allah' you will have success, you will gain sovereignty over the Arabs, and the non-Arabs will submit to you. If you believe, then you will be kings in Paradise."

It continued in this way until the Mission had entered into its eleventh year, with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him

and grant him peace, calling to Allah unceasingly and the idolaters not letting up in their opposition to Islam and their torturing of the Muslims. Then the Night Journey happened and those who left the *deen* left the *deen* and those who remained remained, for the Night Journey was an event that acted as a filter between two parties: the party who believed and were firm in their *deen* and were unmoved by events that uproot mountains; and the party who were idolatrous and expended all their efforts to put an end to Islam no matter how long that might take.

During the three years that preceded the *Hijra*, scarcely a single one of the idolaters of Makka had become Muslim. Those who were already Muslim, however, became stronger in their *deen* and this period served to polish and educate them in Islam. Although the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, did not for one moment leave off calling the idolaters to Islam, the believers used this period to study the Qur'an: Allah was preparing them to be worthy enough to carry the banner of Islam and spread its message far and wide.

Despite the fact that the Muslims were confined to Makka and despite the fact that the period of three years between the Night Journey and the *Hijra* was a period of consolidation and education, the spread of Islam had not completely ground to a halt. On the contrary, Allah had set up the perfect means for Islam to spread outside of Makka, as will be made clear. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had gathered by his side in Makka the best of his people, and the only ones who remained with him were those who were unwavering in their calling to Islam, but there was not much more he could accomplish in Makka at that time. So there was no escaping the fact that the community would have to leave Makka so that they could eventually return there when circumstances were different and they held the upper hand. The means of spreading the *Deen* were to be found outside Makka.

Eventually a group of people from Yathrib were present, so he called them to Allah, set out the Message of Islam before them and recited to them verses from the Qur'an. They accepted Islam and promised to meet him the following year. When they returned to Yathrib they gave their people the good news of Islam.

Thereupon Islam became the topic of conversation in Madina and some of them became Muslim.

The following year, twelve men presented themselves to the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and pledged allegiance to him on the basis that, as they themselves had said, "We will not associate anything with Allah, nor steal or fornicate, kill our children or give a false ascription of paternity – making up lies about our bodies – or disobey you in respect of anything that is right."

He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "If you fulfil your pledge, then you will have Paradise. If, however, any of you does one of the things he has pledged not to, then his destiny will be in the hands of Allah: if He wants He will punish him, and if He wants He will forgive him."

This pledge was an undertaking of excellence and goodness: it was a pledge to act nobly and with good conduct and call people to do the same. Look at the precise way in which the pledge was phrased: he did not say 'or disobey you', but qualified it by saying 'or disobey you in respect of anything that is right'. If you reflect upon this, you will, without doubt, come to the conclusion that this pledge is a divine one.

The new Muslims returned to Madina with transformed characters, faces beaming with the light of Islam, and hearts immersed in the ocean of mercy, and immediately began to call people to Islam, giving the good news of the Garden and warning about the Fire.

Then again, the following year, they returned to Makka. This time they numbered seventy men and two women. They met with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, who was accompanied by al-'Abbas ibn 'Abdi'l-Muttalib and one other individual.

According to As'ad ibn Zurara: "The first person to speak was al-'Abbas ibn 'Abdi'l-Muttalib, who said, 'Tribe of Khazraj, you have invited Muhammad to what you have invited him to and Muhammad is the dearest of my family to me. By Allah, those of us who believe in what he says will protect him, and so will those of us from his family who do not believe in what he says, on account of his lineage and nobility. Apart from you, all people

have denied Muhammad. If you are strong, steadfast, experienced in war and are not concerned by the fact that all of the Arabs will become your enemy and strike at you as if from a single bow, then gather your thoughts, consult amongst yourselves and do not allow yourselves to become disunited – act in everything collectively. Truthfulness is the best form of speech.”

Al-Bara' ibn Ma'rur said, “We have heard what you have to say but, by Allah, if we had in our hearts anything other than what we have said, then we would have expressed it. We want to fulfil our pledge, be truthful and give our lifeblood for the cause of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him.” The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, recited the Qur'an to them, called them to Allah, encouraged them to accept Islam and reminded them of the reasons they had come together.

Al-Bara' ibn Ma'rur responded by affirming his faith and then said, “Messenger of Allah, we have pledged allegiance to you, and we are men at arms and have inherited that from our ancestors.”

Al-'Abbas ibn 'Abdi'l-Muttalib said, having taken hold of the hand of the Messenger of Allah: “Lower your voices, for there may be spies around. Let your elders come forward and they will be the ones to convey our words to the rest of you. We fear that your people might rise up against you. After you have pledged your allegiance, go back to your places.”

Al-Bara' ibn Ma'rur again spoke. He responded to al-'Abbas ibn 'Abdi'l-Muttalib and then said, “Messenger of Allah, stretch out your hand.” So the first person to take the hand of the Messenger of Allah was al-Bara' ibn Ma'rur.

Then every one of the seventy people took his hand and pledged allegiance to him and the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “Musa chose twelve leaders from the tribe of Israel. I will choose twelve leaders from amongst yourselves, and none of you should be disappointed if you have not been chosen, because Jibril makes the choice for me.” When he had chosen them, he said to the leaders, “You are the ones who will be responsible to me for your people, just as the disciples were responsible to 'Isa ibn Maryam and just as I am responsible for my people.”

They said, “Yes, we will be.”

Then the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Go back to your camp."

Al-'Abbas ibn 'Ubada ibn Nadla said, "Messenger of Allah, by the One Who sent you with the Truth, if you want us to, we will fall upon the people of Mina with our swords." He was the only one of them who was carrying a sword that night.

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, replied, "We have not been ordered to do that, so disperse and go back to your camp." When the seventy left the presence of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, his spirits were high, for Allah had given him a group of people to protect him who were strong and experienced in matters of war.

The tribulations experienced by the Muslims at the hands of the idolaters worsened and it became very difficult for them to carry on, so they complained to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. They asked his permission to emigrate and he said to them, "I will tell you the place to which you should emigrate: that place is Yathrib. Whoever wants to leave should go there."

The Muslims started to emigrate in secret with the effects of their education by the Messenger of Allah clearly showing on their faces. They had come to embody trust in Allah, patience, enduring difficulty for their *deen* and being part of the army of Allah. They were emigrating to Allah to work towards making His *deen* uppermost and to establish Islam, even if the unbelievers did not like it. The Messenger of Allah and his Companions never saw emigration as a way of escaping from hardship and finding peace and tranquillity, but rather saw it as a way of opening up a new front in the battle against the idolaters and the struggle in the Way of Allah. The Muslims continued to emigrate to Madina, one by one or in groups, until only the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, Abu Bakr, 'Ali and a few ill or handicapped people remained.

Then the time came for the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, to emigrate. There was the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, standing on the hills overlooking Makka, looking longingly at his homeland, knowing that some day he would return there and

bring the good news of Islam to every household therein. As he continued on his *Hijra* and Makka began to disappear from his sight, he bade it farewell and said these touching words, "By Allah, you are the land which I love the most. If it had not been for your inhabitants expelling me, I would never have left you."

Then he and Abu Bakr as-Siddiq went to the Cave of Thawr and hid there. When the idolaters found out that he had left, they became enraged and resolved not to allow the two emigrants to escape. They had already plotted to kill the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, for they had no qualms about killing anyone who said "My Lord is Allah". They had finished plotting how they would kill the Prophet, peace be upon him, before he had left, and agreed on a scheme proposed by Abu Jahl. He said, "I think that you should take a steadfast young man from each tribe of the Quraysh and give each of them a sharp sword. They should then all strike him at the same time as if they were a single person, and then his blood will be shared between all of the tribes. Banu 'Abd Manaf would not be able to stand against all the tribes and would thus be forced to accept the blood money which we could give them." *"They plotted and Allah plotted. But Allah is the Best of Plotters."* (3:53)

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and Abu Bakr were hiding in the cave when Abu Bakr began to feel sad and fearful for the welfare of the Messenger. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in order to fill the heart of his companion with confidence and optimism, replied, as attested to by the Qur'an, *"Do not be despondent, for Allah is with us."* (9:40)

When Abu Bakr heard the tread of the idolaters' sandals at the front of the cave and heard their loud voices full of suppressed anger and rage, he said, "If one of them were to look down at his feet they would be able to see us." The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, smiled and said, "What do you think of two people whose third Companion is Allah?"

After the idolaters finished their search and went back, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and his companion left the cave. This happened at night on Monday the fourth of Rabi' al-Awwal.

While they were on the road, Suraqa ibn Malik caught up with them armed to the teeth with all manner of weapons on a horse whose speed rivalled the wind. He wanted to take them both prisoner in order to obtain the reward which the idolaters had offered to any person who brought them the Messenger of Allah, dead or alive.

When he got close to them, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, prayed against him and the legs of his horse became stuck to the ground. He said, "Muhammad, call on Allah to free my horse and I shall remain behind you and cause all those who come behind me to go back." He, peace be upon him, did what he asked, the horse was freed and Suraqa went back and found some people searching for the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. He said to them, "Go back! I have checked out the path ahead for you and there is nothing there. You know how good I am at finding people's tracks." And so they turned back.

The riders continued with Allah protecting them until they reached Madina, where they were given a momentous reception.

The first things that the Messenger of Allah did upon entering Madina were to build a mosque founded on *taqwa* from its first day, and to form a brotherhood between the Muhajirun and the Ansar, giving reality to the Islamic principle understood from the Quranic verse, "*The believers are brothers.*" (49:10)

Al-Busayri said it very well in his *Hamziyya* [poem]:

"Woe to those who expelled a Prophet from a land
whose lizards and gazelles had become familiar with him.
They thought nothing of him while the tree-trunk
longed for him; they hated him while strangers loved him.
They expelled him from it while a cave gave him refuge
and a coloured-pigeon protected him.
While a spider's web protected him
when the pigeon alone was not enough.
He hid from them close by where they could see him,
his concealment coming from extreme conspicuousness.
The Chosen One travelled in the direction of Madina
from Makka
rather than any other direction he might have taken".

A different view of the *Hijra*

The *Hijra* was both an historical reality and a beautiful spiritual symbol expressing that which a Muslim must do throughout his life with every breath in his body. It is this second understanding of the *Hijra* that I want to talk about now: a spiritual *hijra* that is not bound by place or time.

This view of the *Hijra* as something that goes beyond the historical event and as something that is not bound by place or time may be found both in the Noble Traditions of the Prophet and in the Glorious Qur'an. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "The Muslim is he from whose tongue and hands the Muslims are safe, and the emigrant is he who avoids that which Allah has prohibited." (al-Bukhari)

In the next few paragraphs we will strive to make this spiritual meaning of the *Hijra* very clear. Allah says: *"If you do not help him, Allah did help him when the unbelievers drove him out and there were two of them in the Cave. He said to his companion, 'Do not be despondent. Allah is with us.' Then Allah sent down His Serenity upon him and reinforced him with troops you could not see. He made the word of the unbelievers undermost. It is the Word of Allah that is uppermost. Allah is Almighty, All-Wise."* (9:40)

In this noble verse, Allah tells us of the time when the unbelievers drove out the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, from Makka; and about his emigration and departure, under cover of night, from the land where he had been born, and where his family and people lived, to a land in which he would find the freedom to call people to Allah in safety. Allah describes the *Hijra* as a victory.

It may seem strange to the casual observer at the time for the *Hijra* to be described as a victory, because the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and Abu Bakr as-Siddiq, may Allah be pleased with him, were hiding in a cave, while the idolaters were everywhere with their horses and weapons, searching every nook and cranny to find and punish him. There is no doubt that it was a victory, however, because it was a flight towards Allah; and every flight to Allah is a victory, even if it ends in death. Allah says: *"Those who emigrate in the Way of Allah and then are*

killed or die, Allah will provide for them handsomely. Truly Allah is the Best Provider.” (22:56)

We are all ordered to flee towards Allah or, to put it another way, to make *hijra* towards Him, for He says: “*So flee to Allah. Truly I bring you a clear warning from Him.*” (51:50) Lut, peace be upon him, said in the Words of the Qur’an: “*I am leaving this place to follow the pleasure of my Lord.*” (29:25) Ibrahim, peace be upon him, said in the Words of the Qur’an: “*I am going towards my Lord; He will be my guide.*” (37:99)

Fleeing to Allah, making *hijra* for Allah and moving towards Him are all things that characterise the sincere believer: they flee towards Him in every moment of each day and it is towards Him that they direct all of their actions.

Some people make their *hijra* for a woman, seeking to marry her, or for this world, seeking out its good things, but the true believer makes his *hijra* to Allah alone, desiring nothing other than His Noble Face; and if he does that then Allah is with him.

When the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, told Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, ‘Do not be distressed! Allah is with us,’ he said that because their *hijra* was to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds, the One without partner. When a *hijra* is to Allah, Allah sends down serenity, tranquillity and contentment upon the person making that *hijra* and sends him aid in the form of armies that the eye may not see. He places him within the sphere of His protection and surrounds him with all that brings comfort to his soul, peace to his mind and good fortune in all that happens to him, for even if he were to be thrown into a fire he would feel nothing except coolness and safety.

Allah has set out for the believers stages by which they may make *hijra* to Him. The first stage is by making sure one has a pure intention, desiring the Face of Allah alone. As the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, says, “Actions are according to intention and every man has what he intends. If a person makes his *hijra* for Allah and His Messenger, then his *hijra* is to Allah and His Messenger. If he makes his *hijra* for the sake of this world, then that is what he will get, and if (he makes his *hijra*) for the sake of a woman, then he will marry her. His *hijra* is for

whatever he emigrates for.” (al-Bukhari, Muslim, Abu Dawud, at-Tirmidhi and an-Nasa’i)

If a person’s intention in performing an action is for Allah, then that action is a *hijra* to Him. If, however, his intention is not for Allah when he does something then that action, no matter how good it may appear on the surface, will be as atoms scattered in the wind: it will be as nothing.

From here, it should become obvious to any true believer how far the ideas spread by certain deviants have moved away from the true and sound *deen*. Such people say things like “The purpose of knowledge is knowledge, the purpose of art is art and the purpose of good is for the sake of goodness or in order to assuage one’s conscience.” All of these ideas indicate that they have completely misunderstood the true spirit and thrust of the *Deen*. Their deviant ideas also pose a palpable danger to society, for if scholars and artists do not intend Allah by their actions their intentions quickly become evil and corrupt – and humankind, instead of being happy, become miserable and wretched.

In order to be truly aware of what is good and what is evil we must have the *Deen*, for it is not possible otherwise to come to a true understanding of it. Many great minds have tried to define it outside a religious framework, but they failed, coming into conflict with each other over it. Not one of them has succeeded or come up with a valid conclusion.

The believer is the one who makes *hijra* to Allah by means of his knowledge, his art and his understanding of what is good. The great companion ‘Amr ibn ‘Anbasa, may Allah be pleased with him, asked the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, “Which aspect of faith is the most excellent?” The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, replied, “*Hijra*.” “What is *hijra*?” asked the companion. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, replied, “*Hijra* is to leave that which is bad and evil.”

At-Tabarani related that Umm Anas, may Allah be pleased with her and her son, said, “Messenger of Allah, advise me.” Part of the Prophet’s advice to her was “Avoid disobedient acts: that is the best form of *hijra*.”

All types of acts of worship in Islam are acts of *hijra* to Allah; and by them a believer's connection to Allah is strengthened and he may obtain His Pleasure and obtain good fortune.

Prayer is an act of flight from the surroundings of the material world to a place where one is standing before Allah and engaging in intimate conversation with Him for even a mere moment of time: it is emigration to Allah.

Zakat is divesting oneself of a part of one's material wealth in order to get close to Allah: it is moving towards Allah.

Fasting is the avoidance of material goods (i.e. food and drink) for a period of time in order to purify oneself and get close to Allah: thus it is also moving towards Allah.

The rites of *Hajj* are the ultimate forms of divesting oneself for Allah, and this is personified by the spiritual call, 'At Your service, o Allah, at Your service'. What a noble form of *hijra* this is!

The clearest and most complete picture of the greatest Islamic *hijra* may be found in Allah's Words: "Say: 'My prayer and my rites, my living and my dying, are for Allah alone, the Lord of all the worlds, Who has no partner. I am commanded to be like that and I am the first of those who submit.'" (6:164-165)

The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "There is no *hijra* after the conquest [of Makka], but there is *jihad* and intention." This means *jihad* in all its forms and a sincere intention for the sake of Allah alone.

Let us make the great *hijra* to Allah, my believing brothers and sisters, for therein lies all of goodness. Success is from Allah.

Passages

By means of the following extracts, we have attempted to give a clear picture of the *Hijra* in terms of its inception, nature, and the way that it indicates the depth of faith of the Prophet and Companions in the Message and Messenger, and the strength of their certainty that the words of the Messenger of Allah were all true and his actions were all sincere.

Jihad in the way of calling people to Islam

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, spent the first three years of his mission in Makka keeping his prophethood secret and then, in its fourth year, announced it to the people and began to call them to Islam for the next ten years. Every year, during the time of the *Hajj*, he would approach the pilgrims at their halting places in 'Ukaz, Majanna and Dhu'l-Majaz, asking them to protect him so that he could be free to convey the Message of his Lord, and in return they would be granted Paradise. But he was unable to find a single tribe that was prepared to help him or respond to his call.

The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, would ask about each tribe and their halting place and then go to them and say: "People, if you say 'There is no god but Allah', you will have success, you will gain sovereignty over the Arabs, and the non-Arabs will submit to you. If you believe, then you will be kings in Paradise." Abu Lahab would stand behind him and say, "Do not obey him, for he is a liar who has left the *deen* of his forefathers." Thereupon the tribes would respond to him in the most ugly way, abuse him and say, "Your family are more knowledgeable about you as they have not followed you." They would argue and debate with him; and he would speak to them and call them to Allah saying, "O Allah, if You had so willed, they would not have been so." (*Tabaqat* of Ibn Sa'd)

Calling the tribes to Islam

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, went to see the tribe of Kinda in their halting places, but they did not accept the *Deen* from him. He went to see the Banu Hanifa in their halting places but they refused him in an ugly fashion. He also went to 'Amir ibn Sa'sa'a. He visited every single Arab of name and nobility and invited them all to the *Deen*. (*al-Wafa' bi-Abwal al-Mustafa*)

The suggestion to go to Abyssinia

After the Muslims had become more numerous, the faith came out into the open and people began to talk about it. Thereupon many of the idolaters from among the unbelievers of the Quraysh became angry with those members of their tribes who had become believers (and in the beginning the majority of the believers were from the weak) and they began to torture and imprison them: they wanted to compel them to leave their *deen*. So the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, told those believers, "Disperse through the earth." They asked, "Where should we go, Messenger of Allah?" He replied, "Go there," and he indicated that they should emigrate to Abyssinia, which was one of the lands he favoured the most. Thereupon a number of the Muslims, some travelling with their families and some travelling alone, emigrated to Abyssinia." (*Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd*)

The first person to emigrate

According to Qatada: "The first person to emigrate to Allah with his family was 'Uthman ibn 'Affan, may Allah be pleased with him. He went to Abyssinia with his wife, Ruqayya, the daughter of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. News about them was slow to come to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, but eventually a woman from the Quraysh came to him and said, 'Muhammad, I saw your son-in-law with his wife.' He asked, 'What were the circumstances in which you saw them?' She replied, 'I saw that he had placed his wife on a donkey and was leading it.' The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'Allah has accompanied them. Indeed 'Uthman is the first person after Lut to have emigrated with his family.'" (*Dala'il an-Nubuwwa*)

The Emigrants to Abyssinia and the Negus

When they came into the presence of the Negus, Ja'far ibn Abi Talib, may Allah be pleased with him, spoke to him on their behalf. The Negus asked him, "What is this religion that you have

adopted? You have left the religion of your people and have not become Jews or Christians, so what is this religion?"

Ja'far replied, "O king, we were a people who associated others with Allah; we worshipped idols, ate the meat of animals that had died of natural causes, acted badly to our neighbours and saw the unlawful as lawful, thinking that it was lawful for some of us to spill the blood of others and act unjustly to them in other ways. We did not make things lawful, nor did we make them unlawful. Then Allah sent us a Messenger from amongst ourselves whose lineage, truthfulness, honesty and virtuousness were known to us. He called us to worship Allah alone without partner, maintain the ties of kinship, treat our neighbours well, perform the prayer, fast, and not worship anything other than Him."

The Negus said, after summoning his bishops and commanding them to spread out the Gospels around him, "Do you have with you anything of what he has brought?" Ja'far replied that he had. He said, "Recite it to me." Ja'far recited to him the first few verses of *Surat Maryam*. Then the Negus said, "These Words have come from the same niche as that brought by Moses, so go in peace." Then he turned to the emissaries of the Quraysh and told them, "By God, I will not hand them over to you. I will not give you a single man from among them." (*Dala'il an-nubuwwa*)

The Return to Abyssinia

When the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, returned to Makka after the first *hijra*, their people treated them even worse, and their families seized them and inflicted much harm upon them. Thereupon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, gave them permission to go to Abyssinia a second time. However, it was even more difficult for them to leave the second time, and the Quraysh acted very violently towards them, caused them much harm and tried to prevent them leaving, having heard about how well the Negus had treated them.

'Uthman ibn 'Affan said, "Messenger of Allah, we have gone on our first *hijra* and are going on this one. Are you not coming with us?" The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him

peace, "You are the emigrants to Allah and to me. These two *hijras* are for all of you." 'Uthman said, "That is enough for us, Messenger of Allah." (*Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd*)

Events that led up to the *Hijra* to Madina

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, remained at Makka calling the tribes to Allah. Every year, at Majanna, 'Ukaz and Mina, he would ask them to protect him so that he could be free to convey the Message of his Lord and, in return, they would be granted Paradise. He guided him to the quarter in which the Ansar, whom Allah desired to honour, had set up camp. He came upon a small group from amongst them – all of them sporting shaved heads – and sat down beside them. He called them to Allah and recited verses from the Qur'an to them. They responded to Allah and His Messenger, hurried to accept the *Deen*, became believers, affirmed that he had come with the truth, gave him refuge and helped and assisted him. By Allah, they were a people with the most eloquent tongues and sharpest swords.

They mentioned that the first of the Ansar to become Muslim were As'ad ibn Zurara and Dhakwan ibn 'Abd Qays. They had gone to Makka to ask 'Utba ibn Rabi'a to declare which of them was superior. He told them, "This praying man has distracted us from being able to think about other matters. He claims that he is the Messenger of Allah."

Ibn Sa'd said: As'ad ibn Zurara and Abu'l-Haytham ibn at-Tayyihan had been speaking about *tawhid* in Yathrib. Dhakwan ibn 'Abd Qays said to As'ad ibn Zurara, when he heard what 'Utba had to say, "Here, this is your *deen*." They went to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and he set out Islam before them. They became Muslim and then returned to Madina. As'ad met with Abu'l-Haytham ibn at-Tayyihan, told him about Islam, and explained what the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had told him and called him to. Abu'l-Haytham said, "I bear witness with you that he is the Messenger of Allah," and then he embraced Islam. (*Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd*)

Then he called them to Allah, preached Islam to them and recited some verses of the Qur'an. They became Muslim. They were As'ad ibn Zurara and 'Awf ibn al-Harith ibn 'Afra' from the Banu Najjar; Rafi' ibn Malik from Banu Zurayq, Qutba ibn 'Amir ibn Hadida from the Banu Salama, 'Uqba ibn 'Amir ibn Nabi' from the Banu Haram ibn Ka'b, and Jabir ibn 'Abdullah ibn Ri'ab from the Banu 'Ubayd ibn 'Adi ibn Salama. There were none before the ones mentioned here. Muhammad ibn 'Imran said, "This is the most convincing account that we have heard and is agreed upon by the people of knowledge."

Then they came to Madina, and called their people to Islam. Some of them became Muslim and soon there was no household of the Ansar wherein people were not mentioning the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. (*Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd*)

The Pledge of 'Aqaba

'Ubada ibn as-Samit related: "The year after the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, met with the group of six men from the Ansar, he met with twelve men from the Ansar. This occasion was known as The First 'Aqaba. They were: As'ad ibn Zurara and 'Awf (ibn al-Harith ibn 'Afra') and Mu'adh (ibn al-Harith ibn 'Afra') from the Banu Najjar; Dhakwan ibn 'Abd Qays and Rafi' ibn Malik from the Banu Zurayq; 'Ubada ibn as-Samit and Yazid ibn Tha'laba from the Banu 'Awf ibn Khazraj, 'Abbas ibn 'Ubada ibn Nadla from the Banu 'Amir ibn 'Awf, 'Uqba ibn 'Amir ibn Nabi' from the Banu Salama; and Qutba ibn 'Amir ibn Hadida from the Banu Sawad. These ten were from Khazraj. There were two men from al-Aws: Abu'l-Haytham ibn at-Tayyihan from Malla, an ally of Banu 'Abdi'l-Ashhal, and 'Uwaym ibn Sa'ida from Banu 'Amr ibn 'Awf. They submitted and made the same pledge of allegiance prescribed for women in the Qur'an: that they would not associate anything with Allah, steal, fornicate, kill their children, or give a false ascription of paternity or disobey the Prophet in respect of anything that was right. He said, 'If you fulfil your pledge then you will have Paradise. If, however, any of you does any of the things that you have pledged not to, then his destiny will be in the Hands of Allah.

If He wills He will punish him and, if He wills, He will pardon him." At that time, fighting had not yet been ordained.

Then they went back to Madina and Allah made Islam manifest. As'ad ibn Zurara would gather together in Madina those who had embraced Islam. Then the two tribes of al-Aws and Khazraj wrote to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asking him to send them someone to teach the Quran to them. He sent Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr al-'Abdari to them and he took up quarters in the house of As'ad ibn Zurara, where he would teach and recite Qur'an to them. Some relate that Mus'ab used to assemble meetings for them. Then he and seventy others went out to meet the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in Makka during the time of the *Hajj* season the following year. (*Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd*)

According to az-Zuhri: "When the idolaters became violent towards the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, he told his uncle al-'Abbas ibn 'Abdi'l-Muttalib, "Uncle, Allah will help His *Deen* by means of people who attach little importance to dying for the sake of Allah, so come with me to 'Ukaz and show me the halting-places of the Arab tribes so that I may call them to Allah, Mighty and Exalted, and ask them to protect me and grant me refuge so that I may be free to convey the Message that Allah has sent me with."

Thereupon al-'Abbas said, "Nephew, go to 'Ukaz. I will accompany you and point out to you the halting-places of the tribes." The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, began by going to Thaqif, then took note of all the tribes who had come that year. At the same time the following year, when Allah commanded him to start calling people to Islam openly, he met with six men from the tribes of al-Aws and Khazraj, namely As'ad ibn Zurara, Abu'l-Haytham ibn at-Tayyahan, 'Abdullah ibn Rawaha, Sa'd ibn ar-Rabi', an-Nu'man ibn Haritha and 'Ubada ibn as-Samit. He met with them at night during the days of Mina at the pillar of 'Aqaba. He sat down beside them and called them to Allah. He called them to worship Allah and give him support in establishing His *Deen*: the same *Deen* that all of the Prophets and Messengers had been sent with. They asked the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, to

present to them what had been revealed to him, and he recited the end of *Surat Ibrahim* to them, from "*When Ibrahim said, 'My Lord, make this land a place of safety'*" to the end of the *sura*. The group went apart when they heard the *sura*, humbled themselves before Allah and affirmed the Prophets.

Al-'Abbas ibn 'Abdi'l-Muttalib passed by as they were speaking and recognised the voice of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. He said, "Nephew, who are these people with you?" He said, "Uncle, they are the inhabitants of Yathrib: al-Aws and al-Khazraj. I have called them to that to which I had called the other tribes before them, but they responded to me and affirmed me and have said that they will take me to their land."

Al-'Abbas dismounted, tied his camel and then said to them, "Tribes of al-Aws and al-Khazraj, this is my nephew and he is the most beloved of people to me. If you affirm him and believe in him and want to take him with you to your lands, then I want you to make a pact with me, one that will give me peace of mind: that you will not fail him or deceive him. For your neighbours are the Jews: the Jews are his enemy, and I do not think that you are safe from their machinations."

As'ad ibn Zurara, who found al-'Abbas's words difficult to accept when he accused Sa'd and his companions in this way, said: "Messenger of Allah, give us permission and we will respond to him in a way that will not offend your sensibilities. We will not say anything that you might dislike, but will merely affirm the response we have already given you that we believe in you."

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Reply to him, for we do not suspect you."

Thereupon As'ad ibn Zurara, having turned his face to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Messenger of Allah, every call must be made in a particular way – sometimes gentle, and sometimes harsh and strong. Today you have invited us to something that most people frown upon and find extremely difficult. You have called on us to leave our religion and to follow your *deen*. That is a very difficult position for us to take, but we have agreed to it. You called on us to break the ties that bind us to our neighbours and our close and distant kinsfolk: that is a very difficult position for us to take, but we have

agreed to it. You have called on us, a people whose power and strength is a source of envy to many, to make a man who has been isolated by his own people and abandoned by his own uncles our leader. That is a very difficult position for us to take, but we have agreed to it. All people hate these positions except those to whom Allah has given firm resolve and guidance and those who desire a good outcome. We have accepted all of these things with our tongues, hearts and hands. We believe in what you have brought and affirm it, for a firm knowledge of that has descended upon our hearts. We pledge allegiance to you on that basis and we pledge allegiance to our Lord and your Lord. Allah's Hand is over our hands, our blood is of less importance than your blood, and our hands are below your hands. We will protect you from those things from which we have protected ourselves, our children and our womenfolk. If we fulfil our pledge, then we have fulfilled it by the grace of Allah; if we betray our trust, then we have betrayed by the will of Allah and we will be the unfortunate ones. This is the truth, Messenger of Allah. Allah is the One Whom we ask for help."

Then he turned to al-'Abbas ibn 'Abdi'l-Muttalib and said, "As for you who objected to us before the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had said anything, Allah knows best what you intended by your words. You mentioned that he is your nephew and the most beloved person to you, but we have broken our ties of kinship, cutting off near relatives and distant ones. We bear witness that he is the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and that Allah sent him from Him. We bear witness that he is not a liar, even if that which he brought bears no resemblance to human speech. As for what you mentioned about not feeling at ease with regard to us looking after his affair – to the extent that you asked for a covenant from us –this is a trait that we do not reject if a person asks for it out of love for the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, so take what you want (i.e. we give our covenant to you)."

Then he turned to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and said: "Messenger of Allah, take whatever you want for yourself, and stipulate whatever conditions you want for your Lord."

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "I stipulate for my Lord that you worship Him and do not associate anything with Him. As for myself, I ask that you protect me from that which you have protected yourselves and your children from." They said, "What you have asked is granted, Messenger of Allah."

Al-'Abbas said, "This is an obligation on you. Allah's oath is with your oaths and Allah's guarantee is with your guarantee in this sacred month and in this sacred land. You have pledged your allegiance to him and to your Lord, Allah. Allah's Hand is over your hands. You will be earnest in helping him, strong in supporting him, and will fulfil your compact with him. You will do all this by defending him with your arms, speaking out for him with your tongues, and having sincerity in your hearts. You will not let your desires or fears prevent you from that. This has not been done by any before you."

They all replied, "Yes, we agree to that."

He said, "Allah will hold you to that and be your Guarantor."

They answered, "Yes."

He said, "O Allah, You hear and see us. This is my nephew, and he has asked them to protect him and make him their responsibility. O Allah, be Witness for my nephew over them."

The people were content with what the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had given them and the Prophet, peace be upon him, was pleased with what they had given him. They had said to him, "Messenger of Allah, if we give you all of these things, then what will we get?"

He replied, "You will gain Allah's pleasure and Paradise."

They said, "We are content with that and we accept."

Abu'l-Haytham ibn at-Tayyihan went up to his companions and asked them, "Do you not know that this man is Allah's Messenger to you, and that you have believed in him and affirmed him?" They replied, "Yes, indeed."

He said, "Do you not know that he is in the sacred land of Allah, in the place in which he was born and raised and in which his family lives?" They replied, "Of course."

He said, "If you think that some day you might fail or abandon him because of a trial that may afflict you, then know now that the

Arabs will throw themselves against you as if they were an arrow from a single bow. If you value your own selves, wealth and children more and are not prepared to spend of your selves, your wealth and your children in the Way of Allah, you will receive no reward from Allah." The people all replied, "No, by Allah! We are truly and faithfully with him."

Then he went to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and said, "Messenger of Allah, might it be that after we have fought for you and broken the ties between us and our neighbours, allies and kin, you will return to your homeland and leave us?" The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, smiled and said, "Blood is blood and destruction is destruction." Then 'Abdullah ibn Rawaha said, "Clear the way, Abu'l-Haytham, so that we may pledge allegiance to the Messenger of Allah."

Abu'l-Haytham preceded them in pledging allegiance and said, "I pledge allegiance to you, Messenger of Allah, on the same basis on which the twelve leaders of the tribe of Israel pledged allegiance to Musa ibn 'Imran."

Then 'Abdullah ibn Rawaha said, "I pledge allegiance to you, Messenger of Allah, on the same basis on which the twelve disciples pledged allegiance to 'Isa ibn Maryam."

Then As'ad ibn Zurara said, "I pledge allegiance to Allah and to the Messenger of Allah, on the basis that I will fulfil my covenant faithfully and fulfil my words by my actions and by helping you."

Next an-Nu'man ibn Haritha said: "I pledge allegiance to Allah and to you, Messenger of Allah, on the basis that I will be bold in carrying out the commands of Allah and will not worry whether it is near or far. By Allah, if you wish, Messenger of Allah, we will descend upon the people of Mina with these swords of ours." The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, replied, "I have not been ordered to do that yet."

'Ubada ibn as-Samit said, "I pledge allegiance to you, Messenger of Allah, on the basis that no person's censure will deflect me from obeying Allah."

Then Sa'd ibn ar-Rabi' said, "I pledge allegiance to Allah, Messenger of Allah, and to you on the basis that I will not disobey either of you or say a lying word."

The people returned to their homeland in contentment and happiness: they rejoiced in the Revelation about which the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had told them. After a year had passed and the *Hajj* season had come again, seventy men from amongst them came to meet him.

The Second Pledge of 'Aqaba

When the time of *Hajj* came, the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, who had become Muslim together, made a pact amongst themselves to perform the *Hajj* and to meet with the Messenger of Allah. By that time, Islam had become widespread amongst the people of Madina. A party of five hundred men from the tribes of al-Aws and al-Khazraj left Madina *en route* for the *Hajj*. Within this group there were more than seventy Muslims. They came up to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in Makka and greeted him. He arranged to meet them in Mina in the middle of the *Ayyam at-Tashriq* after the first group participating in the *Hajj* had finished their rites there. He arranged that they meet in the ravine on the right-hand side as they came down from Mina to the lowest part of al-'Aqaba, where the mosque stands today. He commanded them not to rob anyone who was sleeping of his sleep and not to wait for anyone who was absent.

The people went out, surreptitiously, after things had become quiet, one man at a time, until they reached 'Aqaba. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had arrived at that place before them on his own except for al-'Abbas ibn 'Abdi'l-Muttalib. The first person to come to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was Rafi' ibn Malik az-Zurqi, then the rest of the seventy came, one by one. There were two women with them.

The tribulations experienced by the Muslims at the hands of the idolaters worsened and it became very difficult for them to continue, so they complained to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. They asked his permission to emigrate and he said to them, "I will tell you of the place to which

you should emigrate. I have been shown a tract of moorland full of palm trees, between two stony lava tracts. If as-Sarat had been a land of date palms and moorland, I would have said that that was the place." Then a couple of days passed and he came out to his Companions once again in a state of happiness. He said, "I have told you about the place to which you will emigrate. That place is Yathrib. Whoever wants to leave should go there."

The people began to prepare themselves and help and assist one another to make the *hijra*. They began to leave, keeping everything secret. The first of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, to arrive in Madina was Abu Salama ibn 'Abdi'l-Asad, then 'Amir ibn Rabi'a and his wife Layla bint Abi Hathma – she was the first woman to go to Madina. Then the Companions of the Messenger of Allah started to come in waves and they took up quarters in the houses of the Ansar, who gave them refuge, helped them and acted charitably towards them.

Salim, the freedman of Abu Hudhayfa, led the emigrants in prayer at Quba' before the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, came to Madina. (*Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd*) When the Muslims left Makka and made the *hijra* to Madina, the unbelievers of the Quraysh were furious that so many of their young men had escaped.

A group of the Ansar pledged allegiance to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in the second pledge of 'Aqaba and then returned to Madina. When the first of the emigrants reached as far as Quba', they returned with the Messenger of Allah to Makka so that they could make *hijra* with his Companions.

Account of the *hijra* of Abu Salama and his wife and what they encountered on the way

The first of the Qurayshi Companions of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, to emigrate from Makka to Madina was from the Banu Makhzum. His name was Abu Salama 'Abdullah ibn 'Abdi'l-Asad ibn Hilal ibn 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar ibn Makhzum. He emigrated to Madina a year before the

pledge of allegiance at 'Aqaba. He had returned to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, from Abyssinia, but when the Quraysh started to inflict harm upon him once again and he heard that some of the Ansar had become Muslim, he left and emigrated to Madina.

Ibn Ishaq said: "My father Ishaq ibn Yasir related to me on the authority of Salama that his grandmother Umm Salama, the wife of the Prophet, said, 'When Abu Salama made up his mind to leave for Madina, he saddled his camel for me and then placed me on its back with my son Salama ibn Abu Salama in my lap. Then he set out, leading the camel. The men of the Banu'l-Mughira ibn 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar ibn Makhzum came out against him and said, "As far as your own fate is concerned, you are free to do with it what you will, but your wife is a different matter. Do you really think that we are going to let you take her away?" Thereupon they snatched the camel's rope from his hands and took me from him. This made the Banu 'Abdi'l-Asad, the family of Abu Salama, very angry. They said, "No, by Allah! We will not leave our son with her as you have torn her away from our tribesman." They pulled my son Salama back and forth between them until they dislocated his arm and the Banu 'Abdi'l-Asad took him with them. The Banu'l-Mughira kept me with them and my husband Abu Salama went to Madina. Thus was I separated from both my husband and son. I would go out every morning and sit in al-Abtah and weep. I continued to do this until nearly a year had passed; and then one of my kinsmen from the Banu'l-Mughira came by and saw the state that I was in. He took pity on me and said to the Banu'l-Mughira, "Will you not allow this poor woman to go? You have separated her from her husband and child."

"They then told me, "Go and be with your husband if you want." Thereupon the Banu 'Abdi'l-Asad returned my son to me. I saddled my camel, took my son, placed him in my lap and set out to find my husband in Madina. There was not a single soul with me. I said to myself, "I will eke out an existence by getting food from the people I come across until I finally reach my husband."

"When I reached at-Tan'im, I met 'Uthman ibn Talha ibn Abi Talha, brother of the Banu 'Abdi'd-Dar. He asked me, "Where are you going, daughter of Abu Umayya?" I said that I was going to

Madina to find my husband. He asked, "Is there no one with you?" I replied that there was no one except Allah and my son. He said, "By Allah, you should not be left alone." Then he took the camel by its rope and went along with me. By Allah, I have never accompanied an Arab more noble or generous than he. Whenever we reached a halting place, he would make the camel kneel and then move away. After I had dismounted he would then take the camel away and tie it to a tree. Then he would go far away from me and lie down under a tree. When the time arrived for us to depart he would go to the camel, bring it to me and saddle it. Then he would move back and instruct me to mount it. After I had settled on the camel and was comfortable, he would come forward, take hold of the halter and lead it until we came to the next halt. He continued to do this for me until we reached Madinah. When he saw the village of the Banu 'Amr ibn 'Awf at Quba', he told me, "Your husband is in that village" – and indeed Abu Salama had taken up quarters there. "Enter the village and may the blessings of Allah be with you." Then he left to go back to Makka."

Umm Salama used to say, "By Allah, I know of no other family in Islam who have suffered as much as the family of Abu Salama; and I have never met any Companion who was more generous than 'Uthman ibn Talha. (Ibn Ishaq)

The First of the Emigrants to arrive in Madina

Al-Bara' said, "The first of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, to come to us in Madina were Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr and Ibn Umm Maktum and they started by teaching us Qur'an. Next came 'Ammar, Bilal and Sa'd. Then 'Umar ibn al-Khattab came with twenty people. And then the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, came. I never saw people rejoice so much about anything as they rejoiced about him. I even saw and heard young boys and girls saying, "This is the Messenger of Allah! He has come!" He did not come until I had recited "*Glorify the Name of your Lord, the Most High*" (87:1) and a few other short *suras*." (*Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd*)

The believers made *hijra*. Every single Muslim left and went to Madina, except for the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, Abu Bakr, 'Ali, those who were locked up, those who were ill and those too weak to travel. Then the time came for the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, to make *hijra*. (*Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd*)

The *Hijra* of the Messenger of Allah and those things that led up to it

When the idolaters discovered that the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had gone and taken with them their children and progeny to al-Aws and al-Khazraj in Madina, a place they knew to be strong and fortified and a people whom they knew were strong and gifted in warfare, they feared that the Messenger of Allah would go out to them. So they gathered together in the *Daru'n-Nadwa* (the main assembly hall) in order to consult with each other regarding the matter of the Prophet. There was not one man with any degree of tactical acumen or intelligence who had absented himself on that day.

Abu Jahl said, "I think that you should take a steadfast young man from each tribe of the Quraysh and give each of them a sharp sword. They should then all strike him at the same time as if they were one entity and then his bloodprice will be shared between all of the tribes. The Banu 'Abd Manaf would not know what to do after that." They agreed to what Abu Jahl had suggested and went their separate ways.

Jibril came to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, told him about their plot and instructed him to not to sleep in his own bed that night. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, went to Abu Bakr and said, "Allah, Mighty and Exalted, has given me permission to leave."

Abu Bakr replied, "Shall I accompany you, Messenger of Allah?"

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Yes, you shall."

Abu Bakr said, "I ransom you with my father and mother! Take one of these two camels."

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "I will take it after paying you its price."

Abu Bakr had bought them both for eight hundred *dirhams* from the flocks of the Banu Qushayr, and had fed and prepared them in anticipation of making *hijra* in the company of the Prophet; for that was something he had longed to do. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, took one of them and named her al-Qaswa'. Then he commanded 'Ali to spend the night in his bed that night. 'Ali spent the night there in the bed in which the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had been accustomed to sleep, and covered himself with a red Hadrami cloak. The group of young men from the Quraysh gathered outside his house and looked in through a gap in the door, then waited for him to come out.

When 'Ali got out of bed the next morning they asked him about the whereabouts of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. He replied, "I do not know anything about that."

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had gone to the house of Abu Bakr and remained there until night-time. Then he and Abu Bakr had left the city and gone to the cave of Thawr, which they entered. (*Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd*)

Abu Bakr owned a flock of goats which 'Amir ibn Fuhayra used to look after. 'Amir used to bring the goats to them at night and they would milk them. Then, in the early morning, he would allow them to roam freely among other people. 'A'isha said, "We prepared the best sort of provisions for them and made them a meal which we put into a leather sack. Asma' bint Abi Bakr cut off a strip from her belt and tied up the sack with it. Then she cut off another strip and used it to tie up a water-skin. For that reason she was known as '*Dhat Nitaqayn*' ('The possessor of two belts')."

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and Abu Bakr remained in the cave of Thawr for three days, and 'Abdullah ibn Abi Bakr stayed with them in the night

time. Abu Bakr hired a man from the Banu'd-Dayl to act as guide for them. This man was called 'Abdullah ibn Urayqidh. He was an unbeliever, but they trusted him. They left and 'Amir ibn Fuhayra accompanied them. While 'Abdullah ibn Urayqidh led them he recited *rajaz* and the Quraysh had no idea in which direction the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had travelled. (*Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd*)

Abu Jahl hits Asma' bint Abi Bakr

Ibn Ishaq said that he had been told that Asma' bint Abi Bakr said, "When the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and Abu Bakr had left, a number of the Quraysh, including Abu Jahl ibn Hisham, came to see us. They stood outside the door of Abu Bakr and I went out to them. They asked, 'Where is your father, daughter of Abu Bakr?' I said that I did not know where he was. Abu Jahl, who was a rough and dirty man, raised his hand and slapped my cheek so hard that my earring fell off." (Ibn Ishaq)

Abu Bakr speaks about the *Hijra*

Al-Bara' ibn 'Azib said, "Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, came to visit my father in his house and bought a saddle bag from him. He told 'Azib, 'Send your son with me to carry the saddle bag,' and so I carried it for him. Then my father said to him, 'Abu Bakr, tell me what you did when you travelled by night with the Messenger of Allah.' Abu Bakr replied, 'We travelled the whole night and continued to travel until noon the next day after which the road became deserted and there was not a soul to be seen upon it. There was a tall rock rising up above us, which cast a shadow and protected us from the sun, and so we dismounted there. With my hands I flattened out a place for the Messenger of Allah to sleep and laid some furs upon it. Then I bade the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, to sleep and said that I would scout around to see what was out there. He went to sleep and I went out to scout around the area. While

scouting, I saw a goat herder approaching the rock with his flock – he wanted the same thing that we had wanted from it (i.e. shade from the sun). I asked him, “Whom do you belong to, lad?”

“He said that he belonged to a man from Madina or Makka. I asked him if any of his goats had any milk. He said that they had, so I asked him if he could milk one. He said “Yes”, and took hold of one of them. I told him, “Clean the dirt, hair and muck from its udder.” I saw the boy hit one of his hands with the other and then shake the udder. Then he milked the goat into a large vessel containing milk. I had with me a water-skin that I had brought for the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, for him to drink from and to perform *wudu*. I went back to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, but I was reluctant to wake him. It chanced, however, that I returned just as he was awaking. I poured some of the water onto the milk until it had become cool, then I said to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, “Drink, Messenger of Allah.” He drank until he was satisfied and then said, “Is it not time for us to be going?” I concurred and so we continued the journey after the sun had become cooler after the time of the midday nap had passed. Suraqa ibn Malik was right behind us, so I said, “He has caught up with us, Messenger of Allah.” “Do not be distressed,” he replied, “Allah is with us.” The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, supplicated against him and his horse stuck fast to the earth.”

The Messenger of Allah’s departure from the Cave

The Messenger of Allah’s departure from the cave occurred on the night of Monday, the fourth of Rabi‘ al-Awwal. He took his midday nap on Tuesday at Qudayd. When they set out from there, Suraqa ibn Malik came upon them riding his horse. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, made supplication against him and the hooves of his horse stuck firm into the ground. He said, “Muhammad, ask Allah to free my horse and I shall remain behind and turn back those who will come searching for you after me.” He did so [i.e. the Prophet sup-

plicated for him], his horse became free and he remained behind and did as he had promised. (*Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd*)

The Arrival in Quba'

The Muhajirun found the moment of the Prophet's arrival painfully slow in coming. They would come out with the Ansar to Dhuhr Harra al-'Usba at the beginning of the day and wait for him to arrive. When the sun became so hot that it started burning them, they returned to their homes.

When the day of the Prophet's arrival came, may Allah bless him and grant him peace (on Monday the twelfth of Rabi' al-Awwal, according to one narration) they were sitting in their normal place. When the sun started burning them, they went back to their houses. Then, as soon as they got home, a Jewish man shouted out at the top of his voice, from his vantage point in a high building, "Banu Qayla, your man has come." They went out of their houses and saw the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and his three Companions. An uproar and the shout of 'Allah is Great' could be heard as far away as the quarter of the Banu 'Amr ibn 'Awf, so the Muslims armed themselves and went out. When the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, reached Quba', he sat down and Abu Bakr began to address the people. The Muslims came forth and greeted the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace." (*Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd*)

The Arrival in Madina

His Arrival

Zurara ibn Awfa' related that 'Abdullah ibn Salam said: "When the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, arrived in Madina, the people scrambled out to meet him. It was said amongst the people, 'The Messenger of Allah has come.' I came with the other people to look upon him. When I saw the

face of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, I could see immediately that his face was not that of a liar. The first thing that I heard him say was: 'People, spread the greeting far and wide, give people food, maintain the ties of kinship and stand in prayer while other people are sleeping. If you do this then you will enter the Garden in peace.' (*Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd*)

Where the Prophet's camel stopped

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, dismounted beside the rock and then sent for the Ansar. They came to the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, gave him their greetings and said, "Mount your camels, for you will be safe and your commands will be obeyed." The Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and Abu Bakr remounted and the Ansar, carrying their weapons, surrounded them on all sides. The people of Madina could be heard saying, "The Prophet of Allah has come, he has come!" They raised their glances to him, and when they saw him they would again say, "The Prophet of Allah has come." (*Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd*)

When Friday came and the day had advanced, he called for his camel. The Muslims gathered together and armed themselves, then the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, mounted his camel, al-Qaswa', and started to ride her, followed by people on both sides. As he went, more and more of the Ansar joined him. He did not pass a single house without its inhabitants saying to him, "Prophet of Allah, come here and you will have strength, protection and prosperity." In reply, he would bid them well and make supplication for them and say, "The camel is under divine orders, so let it make its own way." When he reached the mosque of the Banu Salim, he performed the Friday prayer with those Muslims who were with him: there were one hundred Muslims present. (*Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd*)

When the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, wanted to move on from Quba', the Banu Salim presented themselves to him, took hold of the halter of his mount and said, "Messenger of Allah, come to be with a large number of peo-

ple who are well-armed and a place that is well furnished." He said, "Clear the way, for she is under orders."

Then the Banu'l-Harith ibn al-Khazraj presented themselves to him and said something very similar. He replied to them in the same way that he had replied to the Banu Salim. Then the Banu 'Adi came forward and said the same and he replied in the same way. This continued until he came to the spot where Allah had ordered al-Qaswa' to kneel. (*Tabaqat Ibn Sa'd*)

Anas said that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, came to Madina and alighted in the quarter of the Banu 'Amr ibn 'Awf. He remained there for fourteen nights and then sent for the Banu'n-Najjar. They came to him bearing swords. It is as if I can still see the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, on the back of his camel, Abu Bakr behind him, and the group from the Banu'n-Najjar surrounding them on all sides. They continued thus until they came to the courtyard of Abu Ayyub. He wanted to perform the prayer when its time arrived, so he prayed there in the places where the goats rested. Then he sent for the Banu'n-Najjar and said to them, "Banu'n-Najjar, tell me the price of this orchard of yours." They said, "No, by Allah. The only price we want for it is the reward from Allah."

Anas said, continuing his narration, "This orchard contained the graves of idolaters, ruined trenches and date palms. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, ordered the graves of the idolaters to be exhumed and moved elsewhere, the trenches to be flattened over and the palms to be cut down. Then they lined up the palm trunks at the *qibla* of the mosque and started carrying rocks to the site and chanting *rajaz* poems. The Prophet was with them and would say, "O Allah, there is no goodness except for the goodness of the Hereafter, so forgive the Ansar and the Emigrants." (*al-Wafa'*)

Joy at his arrival

Anas said, "When the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, came to Madina, the black Abyssinians gave a performance with their spears out of joy that he had come.

‘A’isha said, “When the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, came to Madina, the women and children started singing:

“The full moon has come to us
from the narrow paths of al-Wada’
Gratitude is an obligation upon us for as long
as there are people supplicating to Allah.” (*al-Wafa’*)

The lights of Madina

Anas ibn Malik said, “On the day the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, entered Madina, every part of it lit up.” (*Tabaqat Ibn Sa’d*)

His reception by the Ansar

Al-Bara’ said: “The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, came (to Madina after the *Hijra*), and I have never seen the people rejoice about anything so much as they rejoiced about him. They were so happy that I even heard the women, children and slave-girls saying excitedly, “It is the Messenger of Allah. He has come! He has come!”

Yahya ibn Ya’la said that ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib told them one day while he was recalling the precedence of the Ansar and their excellent qualities, “If a person does not love the Ansar and recognise their rights then he is not a believer. By Allah, in their courtyards and homes they brought up Islam in the way that a foal is raised. They protected it with their swords and their eloquent tongues and generous souls. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to go out during the season of *Hajj* and call the tribes to Allah, but not a single one of them responded to him and accepted his call. He used to go to the tribes in their halting places at Majanna, ‘Ukaz and Mina in order to have a hearing from them when they arrived. He did this year after year and it came to such a point that were people amongst the tribes who would ask him, “Has not the long period of time that you have spent trying to convince us brought you to despair?” This contin-

ued until Allah willed what He willed and he came to the quarter of the Ansar. He presented Islam to them and they responded to him and hurried to accept it. They granted him refuge, aided him and acted charitably towards him. Allah rewarded them with good, and we came to them in Madina and stayed with them in their homes. They denied themselves in order to be generous to us to such a degree that they would draw lots for us. Indeed, they treated us as if we had more right to their property and wealth than they did. They did this out of the goodness of their hearts. Then they gave their lifeblood to protect their Prophet and placed him above them all."

'Aisha said, "The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, remained in the houses of the Banu 'Amr ibn 'Awf for ten days or so, in which time he established the mosque that was founded on *taqwa*. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, prayed in it and then mounted his camel and it started walking, surrounded by the people. He continued until the camel sat at the site of the mosque of the Messenger of Allah in Madina, where some men of the Muslims were praying. It was a place in which dates were stored and was owned by Sahl and Suhayl, two orphan boys who were under the protection of As'ad ibn Zurara. When the camel knelt down, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "If Allah wills, this will be my house." Then he called for the two boys and asked them to quote him a price for the date-store so that he could take it as a mosque. They replied, "Rather we would like to give it to you, Messenger of Allah." As the Muslims built the mosque and carried the bricks used in its construction, the Messenger of Allah would say:

"This burden is not the burden of Khaybar,
for this place has been made good and pure by our Lord.
O Allah, there is no goodness
except for the goodness of the Hereafter,
so forgive the Ansar and the Emigrants."

Abu Sa'id said, "Two men were having an argument about the mosque which was founded on *taqwa* from its first day. One man said that it was the mosque of Quba' and the other said that it was

the mosque of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "It is my mosque." (Muslim)

Abu Sa'id said: "I came in to see the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and asked where the mosque which was founded on *taqwa* was. He took a handful of pebbles and struck the ground with them. Then he said, "This," meaning the mosque of Madina. (Muslim)

Nafi' related that 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar informed him that the mosque, in the time of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was built with mud bricks. Its roof was made of palm branches and its pillars were the trunks of palm trees. Abu Bakr did not add to it in any way, but 'Umar added to it and constructed it in the same way as it had been in the time of the Messenger of Allah – with mud bricks, palms and wood for the pillars. Then 'Uthman changed it and increased its size a great deal. He built its walls with sculpted stone and gravel and used sculpted stone pillars. Finally, he made the roof from oak." (al-Bukhari)

Ibn 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the walls of the mosque of the Prophet were made of the trunks of palm trees in the time of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and the front part of the mosque was shaded by palm leaves. These had decayed somewhat by the time of the caliphate of Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, so he repaired them with trunks and palm leaves. Then, by the caliphate of 'Uthman, it had again become decayed, so he rebuilt it with baked bricks. It has remained firm until this day" (i.e. until the time of 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with both him and his father).

Abu Hurayra and Abu Sa'id related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "The area between my house and my *minbar* is one of the meadows (*rawdā*) of the Garden and my *minbar* is on my Basin." (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

The First *Khutba* (Sermon)

The first *khutba* that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, delivered, according to what I heard on the authority of Abu Salama ibn 'Abdi'r-Rahman – may Allah protect me from attributing words to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, that he did not say – was as follows. He started by praising Allah and glorifying Him with the glory that is His due, then said:

“People, send forth good works to intercede on your behalf. You know well, by Allah, that any one of you could be struck down and leave his flock without a shepherd. Then his Lord will say to him – and there will be no interpreter or chamberlain to veil him from Him – ‘Did My Messenger not come to you and convey My Message to you? Did I not give you wealth and shower My bounty upon you? What have you sent forth for yourself?’ He will look left and right and not find anything. Then he will look in front of him and not see anything except Hell. If a person is able to shield his face from the Fire, even if it be only by giving half a date, then he should do so. If he cannot find that then he should do so with a kind word; for a good deed shall receive its reward tenfold and sometimes even seven hundredfold. May peace, the mercy of Allah and His blessing be upon you.” (Ibn Ishaq)

The Second *Khutba* (Sermon)

The second *khutba* that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, delivered in his blessed mosque was as follows:

“Praise belongs to Allah. I praise Him and seek His help. We seek refuge in Allah from the evils of our selves and from our wrong actions. Whomever Allah guides there is none to mislead him; and whomever Allah misleads there is none to guide him. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, One without partner.

“The best speech is the Book of Allah. He to whose heart Allah has made the Qur'an seem beautiful and who has been guided to

Islam after disbelief has achieved success. He has chosen it over all speech of men; it is the finest and most eloquent speech.

“If you love those whom Allah loves, then you will love Allah with all your hearts. Do not become bored of the Word of Allah and remembrance of Him, and do not allow your hearts to harden against it. Out of all the things that Allah has chosen, He has named in it the choicest of actions, the chosen ones of His slaves, and the righteous forms of speech. All the lawful and unlawful things are mentioned in it. So worship Allah and do not associate anything with him. Have *taqwa* of Him with the *taqwa* that is His due and be true to Allah by carrying out the righteous things you have said with your mouths that you will do. Love each other by the Spirit of Allah that is amongst you. It angers Allah if a person breaks His covenant. May peace, the mercy of Allah and His blessing be upon you.” (Ibn Ishaq)

Madina

Abu Hurayra related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “O Allah, You have made me leave the land which I loved the most, so house me in the land which is the most beloved to You.” Allah housed him in Madina.

Sa'id ibn Yasar said that he heard Abu Hurayra say that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “I have been ordered to a village that eats villages.” It is said that it is Yathrib (Madina), as it purifies people in the way that bellows purify iron by expelling the dross from it. (al-Bukhari)

Abu Hurayra related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “Faith will withdraw into Madina as a snake withdraws into its hole.” (Muslim)

Ibn 'Umar related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: “Islam began as something strange and will once again become something strange. It will withdraw into the area between the two Mosques as a snake withdraws into its hole.” (Muslim)

Abu 'Abdullah al-Quradh related that he heard Abu Hurayra and Sa'd state that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him

and grant him peace, said, "O Allah, bless my community in their *mudd*, bless them in their *sa'*, and bless them in their city. O Allah, Ibrahim was Your slave and close friend, and I am Your slave and Messenger. Ibrahim asked You on behalf of Makka. I ask You the same that Ibrahim asked for Makka on behalf of Madina and the same again. I ask that Madina be permeated by angels and that there be angels at every entrance and exit to the city protecting it and preventing the plague and the Dajjal from coming in. If a person desires evil for its inhabitants, then may Allah melt him just as salt melts snow into water." (Muslim)

According to Ubayy ibn Ka'b: "After the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had come to Madina and the Ansar had given him refuge, the Arabs came against him as an arrow from a single bow. They [i.e. the Ansar] would neither go to sleep nor get up in the morning without having their weapons by their sides. They said, "Do you think that we are going to live to see a time in which there will be tranquillity and we will have nothing to fear but Allah, Mighty and Exalted?" Thereupon the following verse came down: "*Allah has promised those of you who believe and do right actions that He will make them successors in the land as He made those before them successors, and will firmly establish for them their deen with which He is pleased; and give them, in place of their fear, security. 'They worship Me, not associating anything with Me.'* Any who disbelieve after that, such people are deviators." (24:53) (*Dala'il An-Nubuwwa*)

Chapter 7

Miracles

Many tangible miracles, performed by different Prophets and Messengers, peace and blessings be upon them, are mentioned in the Qur'an. For example, in the story surrounding the birth and life of 'Isa, peace be upon him, many miraculous events occur, both before his birth and during his life. We can divide the story into four stages:

1) That which happened to his mother, may Allah be pleased with her, before her pregnancy: *"Every time Zakariyya visited her in the Upper Room, he found food with her. He said, 'Maryam, how did you come by this?' She said, 'It is from Allah. Allah provides for whomever He wills without any reckoning.'"* (3:37)

2) That which happened to his mother, peace be upon her, during her pregnancy: *"Mention Maryam in the Book, how she withdrew from her people to an eastern place, and veiled herself from them. Then We sent Our Ruh to her and it took on for her the form of a handsome, well-built man. She said, 'I seek refuge from you with the All-Merciful if you are godfearing.' He said, 'I am only your Lord's messenger so that He may give you a pure boy.'"* (19:15-18)

This strange news greatly surprised Maryam, for it was something she had not expected. The Noble Qur'an expresses her surprise to the message conveyed to her when she asks in the following ayat: *"She said, 'How can I have a boy when no man has touched me and I am not an unchaste woman?'"* (19:19) She is provided with a decisive reply: *"He said, 'It shall be so! Your Lord says, 'That is easy for Me. It is so that We may make him a Sign for man-kind and a mercy from Us.' It is a matter already decreed.'"* (19:20)

The Qur'an then continues the story of her pregnancy: *"So she conceived him and withdrew with him to a distant place. The pains of labour drove her to the trunk of a date-palm."* (19:21-22) Allah men-

tions Maryam's reaction, peace be upon her, when she realizes the accusations that people will throw her way when they see she is pregnant: *"She said, 'Oh if only I had died before this time and were something discarded and forgotten!'"* (19:22)

This *ayat* brings us to third stage in the story of 'Isa, peace be upon him:

3) The miracle of 'Isa's speaking, peace be upon him, only moments after being born: *"A voice called out to her from under her; 'Do not grieve! Your Lord has placed a small stream at your feet.'"* (19:23)

The different readings of the Qur'an make it very clear that the voice that calls out to her is the voice of 'Isa, peace be upon him, for one transmission reads *"the one underneath her called out to her"*.

The accusations that Maryam, peace be upon her, feared did in fact arise. Allah says: *"She brought him to her people, carrying him. They said, 'Maryam, you have done an unthinkable thing! Sister of Harun, your father was not an evil man nor was your mother an unchaste woman!'"* (19: 26-27)

Upon hearing their accusations Maryam, peace be upon her, pointed to her son and indicated that they should speak to him and he would answer them. In astonishment, her people said: *"They said, 'How can a baby in the cradle speak?'"* (19:28) 'Isa replied to him from his cradle, saying: *"He said, 'I am the slave of Allah. He has given me the Book and made me a Prophet. He has made me blessed wherever I am and directed me to pray and give zakat as long as I live, and to show devotion to my mother. He has not made me insolent or arrogant. Peace be upon me the day I was born, and the day I die and the day I am raised up again alive.'"* (19: 29-32)

'Isa, peace be upon him, grew to maturity and Allah, glory be to Him, taught him the Book and Wisdom, taught him the Torah and the Gospel, made him a prophet and sent him to the children of Israel. At this point, we enter the fourth stage of his life's story.

4) 'Isa's miracles, peace be upon him: 'The Noble Qur'an enumerates his miracles in the following *ayats*: *"And as a Messenger to the tribe of Israel, saying: 'I have brought you a Sign from your Lord. I*

will create the shape of a bird out of clay for you and then breathe into it and it will be a bird by Allah's permission. I will heal the blind and lepers, and bring the dead to life, by Allah's permission. I will tell you what you eat and what you store up in your homes. There is a Sign for you in that if you are believers." (3:48)

'Isa's entire life story, peace be upon him, broke the norms. Extraordinary miracles happened to both him and his mother, even though she was not a Prophet. We, as Muslims, believe in these miracles completely, but at the same time believe that 'Isa, peace be upon him, did not possess any innate ability to do these things. Neither he nor his mother had the ability to create a single fly, even if they were to join together in order to do it. And if a fly were to steal something from them, they would not be able to get it back. They were only able to perform miracles through the grace and permission of Allah, glory be to Him, and for that reason, 'Isa used to say "By Allah's permission" every time he performed a miracle.

Allah's Power is boundless, not limited to such things as these. Allah, glory be to Him, says: *"The likeness of 'Isa in Allah's sight is the same as Adam. He created him from earth."* (3:58)

Even though 'Isa, peace be upon him, was created without a father, he was still formed within a woman's womb. The creation of Adam, peace be upon him, is more extraordinary still, for he was created without a father and never saw the inside of a woman's womb.

We believe in and affirm all the miracles mentioned in the Quran: the miraculous events surrounding 'Isa; the miraculous creation of Adam; the fact that Ibrahim was thrown into a fire and did not burn; the she-camel of Salih; the staff of Musa, peace and blessings be upon them all. We believe in the group of believing young men who slept for 309 years in their cave without perishing; and in the one who came upon a town that had fallen into ruin and said: *"How can Allah restore this to life when it has died?" Allah caused him to die a hundred years then brought him back to life. Then He asked, 'How long have you been here?' He replied, 'I have been here a day or part of a day.' He said, 'Not so! You have been here a hundred years. Look at your food and drink – it has not gone bad – and look*

at your donkey; so We may make you a Sign for all mankind. Look at the bones, how We raise them up and clothe them in flesh.' When it had become clear to him, he said, 'Now I know that Allah has power over all things.'" (2:258)

We also firmly believe in the miracles of the Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in all of their great variety, whether they have been transmitted via the Qur'an or through sound Traditions.

In the Qur'an we find mention of the miraculous Night Journey of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and his Ascent to the Seven Heavens: "*Glory be to Him who took His slave on a journey by night from al-Masjid al-Haram to al-Masjid al-Aqsa, whose surroundings We have blessed, in order to show him some of Our Signs. He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing.*" (17:1)

We find mention of the fact that Allah protected the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, from his enemies throughout his life: "*Allah will protect you from people.*" (5:67)

Another *ayat* that could be considered a miracle of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is the *ayat* predicting the victory of the Byzantines, which was revealed before their victory occurred.

Before we go into more detail about the miracles of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, we would first like to say something about the miracles that the Quraysh asked the Prophet to do, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, but which did not happen. Allah, glory be to Him, says: "*Nothing has prevented Us sending you Signs except the fact that the previous peoples denied them.*" (17:59)

Allah's customary practice with His creation is that, when a nation or people requests a sign and that sign comes to pass but they do not believe in it, He destroys them utterly, such as His destruction of the people of Thamud when they requested the she-camel as a sign and then denied it. Allah, glory be to Him, has destroyed every people that insisted upon miracles being sent down to them but then continued to disbelieve even after they had witnessed those miracles with their own eyes. There is no doubt that Allah, glory be to Him, has destroyed people for other rea-

sons, such as injustice and arrogance, and the stories of those people are related in the Qur'an; but when a people continues to disbelieve even after a sign has been sent to them, their punishment is more severe.

The people of the Quraysh, like the nations before them, asked their Messenger for specific signs. Their reason for asking for those signs was not, however, so that they might believe in them, but in order to cause the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, hardship and inconvenience. Allah, Exalted is He, says: *"They say, 'We will not believe you until you make a spring gush out from the earth for us; or have a garden of dates and grapes from which you make rivers come pouring through; or make the sky, as you claim, fall down on us in lumps; or bring Allah and the angels here as a guarantee; or possess a house built out of gleaming gold; or ascend up into Heaven – and even then we will not believe in your ascent unless you bring us down a scripture to read!' Say: 'Glory be to my Lord! Am I anything but a human messenger?'"* (17:90-93)

The Quran completely clarifies their position, which was not based on sincerity, but rather on obduracy and denial: *"Even if We opened up to them a door into heaven, and they spent the day ascending through it, they would only say, 'Our eyesight is befuddled, or rather we have been put under a spell!'"* (15: 14-15)

At that point, they were not going to believe, regardless of what signs or miracles were shown to them. But Allah had future plans for those Makkans. For all their obstinacy at that point, those same Makkans were to become the protectors of Islam. Allah, glory be to Him, had decreed that the destiny of Khalid ibn Walid and those like him was to be swords of Allah and defenders of His *Deen*. It was their destiny to walk in the light of His Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and for that reason they were not given the miracles they asked for.

As for the miracles and signs that occurred, without being asked for, at the hands of the Messenger of Allah, they are too many to mention them all here. The few miracles that we will mention over the next few pages are those that we have taken from the soundest Traditions and most trustworthy sources, starting with the greatest miracle, the Noble Qur'an itself.

There is no doubt that the hardest task that any messenger faces is that of convincing his people of the truthfulness of his message. Methods used in order to achieve this aim vary.

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, began in the same way that previous Messengers had begun. He informed his people that he was a Messenger, that he had a connection to Heaven and that Revelation continually descended upon him. He told them that Allah had sent him to them with a higher purpose, a purpose that is mentioned repeatedly in the Qur'an: the purification of the soul. This entailed a purification of people's character and a cleansing of society, starting with their faith and beliefs: *"Allah showed great kindness to the believers when He sent a Messenger to them from among themselves to recite His Signs to them and purify them and teach them the Book and Wisdom, though before that they were clearly misguided."* (3:164) And He says: *"Our Lord, raise up among them a Messenger from them to recite Your Signs to them and teach them the Book and Wisdom and purify them. You are the Almighty, the All-Wise."* (2:128)

For that reason we may say that his sending was a mercy to all the worlds: *"We have only sent you as a mercy to all the worlds."* (21:106)

The Arabs, however, mocked and belittled his call and invitation to them, prompting the need for a sign from Allah to non-pluss them and render them impotent. That sign was the Noble Qur'an. The Qur'an challenged them directly. Step by step, the Qur'an demonstrated to them their incapacity in the face of its majestic language. First the Qur'an challenged them to write a Qur'an like it, telling them they would not be able to do so even if all of mankind and *jinn* were to work together then the Qur'an challenged them to produce ten chapters (*suras*) like the Qur'an, and finally it challenged them to come up with just a single chapter (*sura*). Allah says:

"Say: 'If both men and jinn banded together to produce the like of this Quran, they could never produce anything like it, even if they backed each other up.'" (17:88)

"Or do they say, 'He has invented it'? Say, 'Then produce ten invented suras like this, and call on anyone you can besides Allah, if you are telling the truth.'" (11:13)

"If you have doubts about what We have sent down to Our slave, produce another sura equal to it, and call your witnesses, besides Allah, if you are telling the truth. If you do not do that – and you will not do it – then fear the Fire whose fuel is people and stones, made ready for the unbelievers." (2: 22-23)

Many of our rightly-guided ancestors, may Allah be pleased with them, dedicated themselves wholeheartedly to the service of the *Sira* (life-story) of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. Those people made sure that they did not claim anything as fact until they had completely ascertained its veracity – they sorted through the reports that came to them, removing the false and confirming the sound and true. The value of the service that they performed for us is immense. The true details of the life of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, are now open and clear to us, because of the precise work that they did in sifting and filtering the transmissions that had come to them.

Within these rigorously authenticated works of *Sira*, many miracles are related and their sound chains of transmission are there for all to see. They are authenticated in such a thorough way that it is impossible for any sincere or righteous person to reject them, and are no stranger than the miracles that happened at the hands of Messengers before him, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. Many miracles are proven to have occurred at the hands of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, but his greatest miracle was without a doubt the Qur'an.

The Qur'an: The Greatest Miracle

Ibn Khaldun says in his book *The Signs of the Prophets*:

"Another of their signs is that they perform deeds beyond normal human ken, and these bear witness to their truthfulness. These miracles are acts the like of which it is impossible for other human beings to replicate and for that reason they are called '*mu'jizat*' (literally, 'something that renders others powerless in the

face of it'). They are not within the ability of man to achieve, but are beyond his capacity.

"That being the case, then know that the greatest and most clearly proven miracle is the Noble Qur'an, which was revealed to our Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. Usually miracles occur independently from, and separately from, the Revelation that is given to a Messenger, and happen in order to bear witness to the truthfulness of that Revelation. The Qur'an, on the other hand, is both the claimed Revelation and the miracle that others are incapable of reproducing. It is its own proof and needs no outside proof. It is the clearest possible proof, because it combines within itself both the proof and what is to be proved.

"That is the meaning of the Prophet's statement when he says, 'Every Prophet has been given signs the like of which people are inclined to believe in. What I have been given is a Revelation revealed to me by Allah. Therefore I hope to be the one with the greatest number of followers on the Day of Rising.'"

He alludes to the fact that when a miracle is as clear-cut and strongly proven as this, being the revealed Book itself, then its effect will be greater and more will believe it. When he says "followers", he is referring to those who believe in him.

The author of *ash-Shifa'* said: "Abu Hurayra related from the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, that he said, 'Every Prophet has been given signs the like of which people are inclined to believe in. What I have been given is a Revelation revealed to me by Allah. Therefore, I hope to be the one with the greatest number of followers on the Day of Rising.'

"What this means, according to scholars, is that his miracle, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, will remain as long as this world remains, whereas the miracles of the other Prophets came for a set period of time and then disappeared. The only ones who witnessed their miracles were those people who were present at that time. The miracle of the Qur'an, however, has endured for century after century and will endure until the Day of Judgement."

The miraculous nature of the Qur'an

Many books have been written on the miraculous nature of the Qur'an, both in ancient times, such as that written by Imam al-Baqillani and, in more modern times, that written by Mustafa Sadiq ar-Rafi'i. Within the Qur'an, there are verses which challenge mankind to produce something akin to it in quality, or even to produce a single chapter like it. In regard to this aspect of the Qur'an, the author of *Kitab al-Wafa*, says:

"Because magic was so widespread and was the dominant science in the time of Musa, peace be upon him, the miracles that he performed were generally magical by nature, such as parting the sea and the transformation of his staff. Because medicine was the dominant science in the time of 'Isa, peace be upon him, and many people had reached a high level of competence in it, the miracles that he performed were generally medical by nature, such as bringing the dead back to life and healing lepers. In the time of our Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, people prided themselves on their linguistic excellence and their composition of poetry, so they were sent the Qur'an."

The miraculous nature of the Qur'an is multi-faceted

Its linguistic excellence and its usage of rhetorical tools, such as conciseness and elaboration. For example, the Qur'an will sometimes relate a particular story at length, and then, in a different place, will relate the same story in an abridged form, without contradicting or harming the longer version in any way.

A comparison of the styles of speech and the poetic meters; it is in this regard that the Qur'an challenges the Arabs. The Arabs were unable to match its superior style, and in amazement they admitted to its superiority.

The detailed stories found in the Qur'an about previous peoples, and the biographies of Prophets who were known to the People of the Book. For the one who related these stories was illiterate, unable to read or write, and had not spent time in the com-

pany of priests and rabbis. And even those Arabs who could read and write and had spent significant time in the company of priests and rabbis knew nothing of many of the things related in the Qur'an.

The Qur'an's foretelling of future events: events that had not yet come to pass when those verses were revealed: these events always happened, and in exactly the ways that the Qur'an had predicted. Examples of this include when Allah addresses the Jews, saying, *"Then long for death"* (2:93) and then says, *"But they will never ever long for it"* (2:94); or when Allah says, *"Produce another sura equal to it"* (2:22) and then says, *"And you will not do it"* (2:23), and they did not do it. Or when Allah says, *"Say to those who disbelieve: 'You will be overwhelmed'"* (3:12), and they were overwhelmed; or when Allah says, *"You will enter al-Masjid al-Haram in safety, Allah willing,"* (48:27), and they did enter in the way described; or when Allah says about Abu Lahab, *"He will burn in a Flaming Fire, and so will his wife"* (111:3-4), which is a clear indication that he would die in disbelief – and he did.

The fact that there are no contradictions or inconsistencies in the Qur'an. Allah says, *"If it had been from anyone other than Allah, they would have found many inconsistencies in it"* (4:81), and *"It is We Who have sent down the Reminder and We Who will preserve it."* (15:9)

Ibn 'Aqil said, "It has been preserved in its entirety. All of its chapters and verses remain as they originally were and have not been altered. The Qur'an protects itself from being altered because created beings are incapable of producing anything like it."

'Ali Ibn 'Aqil said, "If you want proof that the Qur'an is not the words of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, but was rather been revealed to him, then look at the great difference between his sayings and the style of the Qur'an. It is well known that a person's speech is always inwardly consistent in its style and method of delivery; so this is a clear proof that the Qur'an was not composed by the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, for not a single one of his sayings remotely resembles the Qur'an."

Ibn 'Aqil also said, "Another thing that shows the miraculous nature of the Qur'an is that it is impossible for anyone to find a verse in it whose meaning has been taken from a previous book or writer, whereas people continuously base their styles or thoughts on that which they have found in previous works. For example it is said that al-Mutanabbi took a lot from al-Buhturi."

The author of *al-Wafa* says, speaking of the miraculous nature of the Qur'an, "Two amazing things have come to me (regarding the Qur'an). The first is that the miracles of the Prophets disappeared with their deaths, so if a disbeliever were to ask today, 'What is the proof that Musa and Muhammad were speaking the truth?' and he were told, 'Muhammad split the moon and Musa parted the sea,' he would say, 'That is impossible.' The Qur'an, however, continued to be a miracle demonstrating the truthfulness of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, even after his death, and will remain so forever. Indeed, Allah has made the Qur'an a proof of the truthfulness of all the Prophets, for the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, confirmed them all.

"The second thing is that the Qur'an informed the People of the Book that there was a written description of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in the Torah and Gospel, and gave testimony to the fact that Hatib was a believer and that 'A'isha was innocent. These statements of the Qur'an were on matters that were in the Unseen, so if his description were not in the Torah or Gospel, or Hatib or 'A'isha knew the opposite of what the Qur'an stated to be true, then these Qur'anic statements would have acted to turn these people away from faith."

The French author Etienne Dinet, who embraced Islam and performed the pilgrimage to Makka, and wrote many books on the superiority of Islam and its lofty principles, noted about the miraculous nature of the Qur'an: "The meaning of *ayat* (verses) is 'miraculous signs'. The miracles of the Prophets that preceded Muhammad were, in reality, transitory miracles that were liable to be forgotten all too quickly. The miracle of the Qur'an, however, can be termed 'the everlasting miracle', as its influence is

eternal and its impact never ends. It is an easy matter for every believer, regardless of the epoch in which he lives or the place in which he resides, to witness this miracle by simply reciting the Book of Allah."

In this miracle we find the clearest of explanations for the spread of Islam, a spread which Europeans have found so difficult to explain because they know nothing of the Qur'an, or because all that they do know of the Qur'an has passed through the medium of translations that are both inaccurate and have failed to capture the vibrancy of the language of the Qur'an. The magical allure that characterises this book, and that sets it apart from the other great books of the world, requires no explanation from us, as Muslims, because we believe it to be the Speech of Allah which He revealed to His Messenger. However, we consider that it would be beneficial to relate the opinions of two orientalists whose competence as scholars is well-known.

Sevreau, the first person to translate the Qur'an into French, says: "Muhammad was very proficient in his language, a language which no other language on the face of the earth comes close to matching in richness and harmony. The way verbs in Arabic are put together makes it possible for a thought to be followed to its furthest limits and at the same time be described with extraordinary precision. The sounds created by its words create a musical melody that can imitate the sounds of different animals or the murmuring of flowing brooks; that can replicate the rumbling of thunder or the howling of the winds.

"Muhammad was, as we have mentioned, very knowledgeable in this ancient language that had been graced by many poetic masterpieces. Muhammad therefore strove to embellish his teachings with all the eloquent language at his disposal, making them both beautiful and enchanting.

"Poets in the Arabian Peninsula at that time were held in great esteem by their society. Labid ibn Rabi'a, the famous poet, attached one of his poems to the door of the Ka'ba. His fame and ability made it impossible for anyone to compete with him in the composition of poetry, and no one came forward to compete with him for the prize. One day the second chapter (*Surat al-*

Baqara) was placed next to his poem (it is also said that it was the fifty-fifth chapter, *Surat ar-Rahman*). Labid was greatly impressed by it, despite the fact that he was an idolater, and, after only reading the first few verses, confessed that he been bettered. It was not long after that that he embraced Islam. One day, some people who held him in high esteem asked him about his poems, as they wanted to gather them together in a book. He replied, "I no longer remember any of my poetry, for the magnificence of the revealed verses has left no room for anything else in my memory."

Stanley Lane-Poole observed: "The style used by the Qur'an in every single one of its chapters is a lofty style that seethes with life and emotion. The phrases used are those of a man who has dedicated himself to his mission, and continue, to this day, to bear the imprint of their strength and enthusiasm, and in the midst of these phrases was the firebrand who dictated them. They are words whose presence in the heart of a man make it impossible for him to have been a hypocrite: this heart was the heart of a man who had the greatest influence on the history of mankind."¹

If the beauty and enchantment of the Qur'an had this effect on scholars who had no connection whatsoever with Arabs or Muslims, then what do you suppose its effect must have been on the Arabs of the Hijaz, in whose language the Qur'an was revealed?

It is impossible for most people to have even the slightest idea as to how great that effect would have been. The only ones who can picture this effect are those who have travelled widely and have had the opportunity to witness the effect that the Qur'an has on people's hearts when listening to their imam reciting the holy verses. You can see the most insignificant of Arabs, as soon as they set foot in the city after a difficult journey, before even letting the dust settle or giving themselves an opportunity to rest their aching limbs, competing with each other in order to get to the mosque first, as if the voice of the imam were a magnet

1. This quotation is a translation of the Arabic, so may differ slightly from the original quotation.

pulling them irresistibly towards him. These people prefer the recitation of the imam to the comfort and repose of their beds. Indeed, in the month of Ramadan, after long hard days during which neither food nor drink has passed their lips, they spend the whole night listening to and immersing themselves in Allah's Words.

It is true that many Arabs of today know very little of the *Deen* and often do not know the literal meanings of many of the verses that they hear in the mosque. However, the musical quality and harmony of the imam's recitation finds its resonance in their hearts and brings with it other meanings and understandings that take root in their imaginations. This is what brings tranquillity to the heart, not the soulless explanations and interpretations of the grammarians and logicians.

As for the Arabs of the Hijaz, who both understood the subtle meanings within the Qur'an, as it was in their language that it was revealed, and took its chapters directly from their fellow-countryman, the Messenger himself, they could not listen to the Quran without it filling them with instantaneous excitement and wonder. They would remain rooted to the spot, as if a spell had been cast over them, thinking to themselves, "Is it possible that Muhammad could have come up with these verses – that illiterate man who has no knowledge except that which has been granted to him by nature and the sensitive disposition with which he has been endowed?"

Absolutely not! It is impossible that this Qur'an could have been composed by Muhammad. We have no choice but to admit that Allah, the All-High, All-Powerful is the One Who dictated these clear verses to him. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was not being deceitful when he said, "It is Allah who has sent down the Qur'an." He believed completely that it came from a Divine Source. The terrifying bouts that befell him when Revelation came to him - a Revelation that was in a language totally new to him, that criticised him if he erred and that compelled him to memorise it without leaving him any choice in the matter – left him in no doubt that the Qur'an's source was Divine.

For this reason the Prophet's admiration, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, for the Qur'an knew no bounds. Indeed, Allah revealed to him: "Say, 'Then produce ten invented suras like this, and call on anyone you can besides Allah, if you are telling the truth.'" (11:13) It was not unusual to see the illiterate Prophet challenging the poets with this verse, and thus admitting to their description of him as a liar if they succeeded in doing what they had been challenged to do, because he was safe in the knowledge that they would be unable to do so.

Some contemporary historians have tried to cast doubt on the sincerity of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and to portray him as a man who had no inherent worthiness for greatness, except that he was very ambitious and had a talent for leadership. Views such as this only come from those who have been blinded by bigotry, and whose scholarship has been influenced by the oppressive atmosphere of an epoch that resembles the time of the Spanish Inquisition.

Carlyle, in his book *Heres and Hero Worship*, condemned this reprehensible bigotry and blind stupidity, in his treatise on Muhammad, when he said: "A false man found a religion? Why, a false man cannot build a brick house! If he does not know and follow truly the properties of mortar, burnt clay and what else he works in, it is no house that he makes, but a rubbish heap. It will not stand for twelve centuries to lodge a hundred-and-eighty millions: it will fall straightaway." (*Heres and Hero Worship*, p.58)

The Arabs of that time formed opinions regarding the Qur'an and details of some of those opinions have come down to us. We will start by relating the position of al-Walid ibn al-Mughira regarding the Qur'an. There are two different versions, but they serve to corroborate each other, so we will relate them both.

The first account

Sa'id ibn Jubayr relates that al-Walid ibn al-Mughira and a number of other men of the Quraysh met together during the time of the pilgrimage. He was the eldest man amongst them and so he said to them, "O tribe of Quraysh, the time of the pil-

grimage is almost upon us and during that time delegations from the tribes of the Arabs will come among you. Word has reached them of this companion of yours, so form a unified opinion and do not disagree about him, for if you do then some of you may say something that gives the lie to what others have said."

They said, "What about you, 'Abdu'sh-Shams, why don't you tell us what to say about him?"

"No, you tell me and I will listen to what you have to say," he answered.

They said, "We will say that he is a soothsayer".

"He is no soothsayer," he replied, "for we have seen soothsayers and he does not speak in their sing-song voices or in rhymed prose."

They said, "We will say that he is mad."

"He is not mad," he replied, "We know very well the signs of madness – choking, twitching and whispering – and he is not afflicted by any of them."

They said, "We will say that he is a poet."

"He is not a poet," he replied, "We know poetry in all its forms, whether it be *rajaz*, *bazaj*, *maqbud* or *mabsut*.¹ He is no poet."

They said, "We will say that he is a sorcerer."

"He is not a sorcerer," he replied, "We have seen sorcerers and their magic. He does not blow on things or tie knots as they do."

They said, "What shall we say about him then?"

"By Allah," he replied, "there is a real sweetness to his words! It is as if the root of his words were a date palm, and its branches were dates ripe for the plucking. There is nothing bad that you can say about this man without people knowing that what you are saying is false. The most appropriate thing that you could say about him is that he is a sorcerer who separates father from son, brother from brother, husband from wife and breaks a man's connection with his tribe."

They agreed to say what he suggested and went their separate ways.

1. Types of Arabic metre.

‘Amr related that al-Walid ibn al-Mughira said, “I have heard poetry, *rajaz* and *hazaj*, but I have never heard anything like this (the Qur’an). It is not poetry and yet it possesses both beauty and light. It surpasses everything and is not surpassed by anything.”

The second account

‘Ikrima relates that al-Walid ibn al-Mughira came to visit the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, recited some of the Quran to him and it was as if his heart softened to it. Abu Jahl heard about that and came to see al-Walid.

He said, “Uncle, your people want to gather some money together for you.”

“Why is that?” asked al-Walid.

“To give to you,” he replied, “for you went to Muhammad and have been exposed to his words.”

“The Quraysh know that I am one of the richest people in the tribe,” said al-Walid.

“Then say something about him that will prove to your people that you have rejected his words and despise them.”

“What can I say?” said al-Walid, “For by Allah, there is not one of you who is more knowledgeable about poetry than I am, and I see that his words do not resemble poetry in any way. By Allah, there is a sweetness and a beauty to his speech. Its peak is laden with fruit and its base is lush and plentiful. It demolishes all that is lesser than it and surpasses everything and is not surpassed by anything.”

“By Allah, your people are not going to be satisfied until you say something bad about him.”

“Give me some time to think about it,” replied al-Walid. After spending some time thinking about it he said, “This is a superior form of magic.” Then Allah sent down the following verse and the verses that follow it about him: “*Leave the person I created on his own to Me alone.*” (74:11)

The view of 'Utba

'Utba ibn Rabi'a was one of the leaders of his tribe and was both arrogant and tyrannical. He was an idolater and remained so until his death. The only reason we mention the story of this unbelieving man is that his conclusion is deeply significant and demonstrates how extraordinary the language of the Qur'an must have been, as one of the enemies of Allah recognised its power.

One day, when 'Utba was sitting in the assembly of the Quraysh while the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was sitting by himself in the Mosque, he said to those who were present with him, "Tribe of Quraysh, why do not I approach Muhammad and make him an offer? If he accepts then we will give him what he wants."

This conversation occurred at around the time that Hamza, may Allah be pleased with him, entered Islam, and the leaders of the Quraysh could see that many people were becoming Muslim, so they said, "Go ahead, Abu Walid. Speak to him and make your offer."

'Utba went to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, sat down next to him and said: "Nephew, you are one of us, you have a central status within the tribe and you come from the best of ancestral lines. You have brought your people a weighty matter that has ripped their unity asunder, slammed the door shut on their dreams, dishonoured their gods and made unbelievers of their ancestors. Please hear me out while I lay before you some of the things we are prepared to offer you, for maybe you will agree to one of them."

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Speak, Abu Walid, and I will listen."

"My nephew," said 'Utba, "If the thing that has prompted you to engage in this affair is money, then we will gather enough money together for you to make you the richest man amongst us. If it is desire of eminence and nobility, then we will make you our leader and will do nothing without consulting you first. If you want kingship and dominion, then we will make you our

king. If you are beset by visions and can find no way to repel them, then we will search for a doctor and dedicate our time and money to finding you a cure."

When 'Utba had finished speaking, and the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had heard what he had say, he asked 'Utba, "Have you finished speaking?"

"Yes," replied 'Utba.

"Then listen to what I have to say," said the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

"Yes," replied 'Utba.

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, reciting from the Qur'an: *"In the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Most Merciful. Ha Mim. A Revelation from the All-Merciful, the Most Merciful. A Book whose verses have been demarcated for people who know as an Arabic Qur'an, bringing good news and giving warning; but most of them have turned away and do not hear. They say, 'Our hearts are covered up against what you call us to and there is a heaviness in our ears. There is a screen between us and you. So act: we are certainly acting.' Say: 'I am only a human being like yourselves. It is revealed to me that your god is One God. So be straight with Him and ask for His forgiveness.' Woe to those who associate others with Him: those who do not pay zakat and deny the Next World. Those who believe and do right actions will have a wage that never fails."* (41:1-8)

Whilst the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was reciting, 'Utba leant back on his hands and listened carefully to the words coming from the Prophet's mouth. When the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, reached the verse of prostration (verse 37), he prostrated and then said to 'Utba, "You have heard what you have heard, Abu Walid. Now it is up to you."

'Utba got up and returned to his companions. Speaking amongst each other, they said, "By Allah, a different 'Utba is returning to us from the one who left us." When he had returned and sat down amongst them, they said, "What has happened to you?"

"I have just heard recited to me the like of which I have never heard before. By Allah, what I heard was neither poetry nor

magic nor soothsaying. Tribe of Quraysh, obey me in what I have to say. Let this man be and leave him in isolation. By Allah, what I heard has convinced me that his words will have a tremendous effect. For if the Arabs hear them, [they will follow him and] he will have no further need of you. If he wins victory over the Arabs then his kingdom will be your kingdom, and his power will be your power, and you will be the most fortunate of people because of him."

"His tongue has bewitched you, Abu Walid," they said.

'Utba replied, "This is my opinion about him; but do whatever seems best to you."

The Qur'an and Tufayl ibn 'Amr

Muhammad ibn Ishaq relates: "In spite of his people's behaviour, the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, would still counsel them and call to them to salvation. When Allah protected him from them, the Quraysh began to warn people about him and to tell the Arabs who came to visit to be very wary of him."

Tufayl ibn 'Amr ad-Dawsi related that he came to Makka while the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was there. As soon as he arrived, men from the Quraysh approached him (for Tufayl was a noble man and a skilled poet) and addressed him, saying: "Tufayl, you have come to our city at a time when there is a man amongst us who has created problems for us. He has split our community in two – his words are like magic. He splits father from son, brother from brother and man from wife. We fear that the same thing could happen to you and your people, so do not speak to him or listen to him."

Tufayl said, relating the story, "By Allah, they did not stop until I had agreed not to listen or speak to him for anything. I would even fill my ears with cotton before going to the mosque, for fear that some of his words might reach me unawares."

Tufayl continued, "I went to the mosque early one day and found the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant

him peace, standing in prayer beside the Ka'ba, so I stood close to him. Allah had decreed that I should hear something of his speech and that which I heard was excellent. I said to myself, 'May a mother bereave her son! By Allah, am I not a skilled poet who knows the difference between good and bad? Why should I not listen to this man's words? If what he has to say is fine then I will accept it, and if what he has to say is bad then I will leave it.'

I remained where I was until the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had returned home. I followed him home, entered upon him and said: 'Muhammad, your people said such-and-such about you, and, by Allah, continued to say things to me until they had frightened me so much that I felt compelled to stuff my ears with cotton lest I should hear your words. But Allah has decreed that I hear something of your words, and never before have I heard something so excellent; so explain the matter to me.' He told me about Islam and recited to me from the Qur'an. By Allah, I had never before heard words so fine, nor found a matter to be so just. I became Muslim and bore witness to the truth. I said to him, 'Prophet of Allah, I am a man of authority amongst my people. I shall return to them and call them to Islam, so ask Allah to give me a sign that will assist me in calling to them.' He said, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, 'O Allah, give him a sign.'

I went back to my people, and when I came to the narrow pass that overlooked my village a light like a lamp appeared between my eyes. I said, 'O Allah, place the light somewhere other than my face, for I fear that they may think that it is a punishment that has befallen me for leaving their religion.' So the light moved from my face and lighted on the top of my whip. As I made my way down from the narrow pass, the people below began to look at the light attached to my whip like a lit candle. When I reached the village, my father, who was a very old man, came to me. I said, 'Get away from me, father. I am not from you and you are not from me.'

He asked, 'Why is that, my son?'

I said, 'I have become Muslim and given allegiance to Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.'

He said, 'Alright, my son, then my religion is your religion.' said, 'Go, have an ablution, clean your clothes, then come to me and I will teach you about my religion.' He left, had an ablution, washed his clothes and then I presented Islam to him. He became Muslim.

Then my wife came to me. I told her, 'Get away from me. I am not from you and you are not from me.'

She said, 'I ransom you with my father and mother, why is that?'

I replied, 'Islam has created a divide between me and you.' She became Muslim.

Then I called the people of Daws to embrace Islam. They were very slow in doing so, so I came to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in Makka and said to him, 'Prophet of Allah, the Daws have beaten me. Ask Allah to punish them.'

He said, 'O Allah, guide the Daws. Return to your people, call them (to Islam) and be gentle with them.' I returned and remained in the land of the Daws calling them to Islam until the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had emigrated to Madina and the battles of Badr, Uhud and the Trench had passed. Then I came to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, with those from amongst my people who had become Muslim, while he was at Khaybar. I arrived in Madina with seventy or eighty households of the Daws, and then caught up with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, at Khaybar, where we were assigned a portion (of the booty) with the rest of the Muslims.

I remained with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, until Allah opened up Makka for him. I said to him, 'Messenger of Allah, send me Dhu'l-Kaffayn, the idol of 'Amr ibn Hamama, so that I may burn it'."

According to Ibn Ishaq: "At-Tufayl went out to it, started to prepare a fire around it and said (the following verses):

"Dhu'l-Kaffayn, I am not your worshipper.

Our birthday is older than yours.
I have filled your heart with fire."

He returned to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and remained with him in Madina until the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, died. When the Arabs apostatised, he went out with the Muslims and stayed with them until they had defeated Tulayha and all of the Najd region. Then he went with the Muslims to al-Yamama accompanied by his son 'Amr ibn at-Tufayl. On the road to al-Yamama he had a dream. He told his companions, "I have had a dream, so interpret it for me. I saw my head being shaved, a bird fly out from my mouth, a woman meet me and insert me into her womb and my son hasten to search for me, but being held back from me." They stated, "May it be good." He said, "I will interpret it, by Allah."

They asked, "What is the interpretation?" He replied, "As for the shaving of my head, that means that it will be removed. As for the bird flying out of my mouth, that is my soul. As for the woman who inserted me into her womb, [her womb] represents a grave that will be dug in the ground for me, and into which I will disappear. As for my son's search for me and then being held back from me, I think that means that he will try his hardest to share my fate."

He was martyred, may Allah have mercy on him, at al-Yamama, and his son sustained great injuries from which he recovered. His son was later martyred in the year of al-Yarmuk in the time of 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him.

Abu 'Ubayd mentioned that one of the desert Arabs heard a man recite "*Proclaim what you have been ordered to*" (15:94) and said upon hearing it, "I prostrated on account of its eloquence."

Another desert Arab heard a man recite "*When they despaired of him, they went apart to talk alone.*" (12:80) and said, "I bear witness that no created being would be able to produce words such as these."

It is related that 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, may Allah be pleased with him, was sleeping in the mosque one day when suddenly he noticed a man standing by his head and bearing witness to the Truth. He asked him for his story and the man replied that he was one of the patricians of Byzantine who was proficient in the

Arabic language, among others. He informed him that he had heard one of the Muslim prisoners reciting a verse from their Book, reflected on it, and realised that the one verse combined within it everything that had been revealed to 'Isa ibn Maryam concerning the conditions of this world and the Next. The verse in question was *"All who obey Allah and His Messenger, and have awe of Allah and taqwa of Him, they are the ones who are victorious."* (24:50)

Al-Asma'i related that he heard some words uttered by a young lady and said to her, "Allah fight you, how eloquent you are!" She replied, "Can there be any eloquence left after Allah's words: *"We revealed to Musa's mother, 'Suckle him and then when you fear for him cast him into the sea. Do not fear or grieve; We will return him to you and make him one of the Messengers."* (28:6) For in the one verse we find two commands, two prohibitions and two glad tidings."

The Qur'an describes itself in various verses. The following verses are a selection: *"Truly it is a Mighty Book; falsehood cannot reach it from before it or behind it. It is a Revelation from One who is All-Wise, All-Praiseworthy."* (41: 40-41)

"Truly it is a Noble Qur'an in a well-protected Book No one may touch it except the purified; a Revelation sent down from the Lord of all the worlds." (56:80-83)

"This is the true account." (3:61)

"And this is a Book We have sent down and blessed, so follow it and have taqwa so that perhaps you will gain mercy." (6:156)

"No indeed! Truly it is a reminder; and whoever wills pays heed to it – Inscribed on honoured Pages, exalted, purified by the hands of scribes, noble, virtuous." (80:11-16)

Al-Kindi on the miraculous nature of the Qur'an

Al-Kindi says about the Messengers: "There are elements of the knowledge possessed by those men who were chosen by Allah which can not be obtained by study or experience. This knowledge is theirs without asking, without effort, and without study. It comes to them without them using human artifice,

experimentation or logic. They spend no time in acquiring this knowledge. Rather, Allah, glory be to Him, grants them this knowledge because He wants to purify and fill their hearts with light so that they may become vessels for the Real and worthy carriers of the Message that He entrusts them with. This knowledge is only for the Messengers, peace be upon them, and is the sign that differentiates them from the rest of mankind.

“Intellects recognise with certainty that this knowledge is directly from Allah the Almighty, for they can see that it is something that it is impossible for man to compose or produce. Recognising that it is beyond the capacity of man, intellects bow down to it and obey the carrier of the knowledge, for the natural state of man is to believe in that which the Messengers, peace be upon them, have brought.”

Al-Kindi continues to explain the differences between acquired knowledge and divine knowledge, saying, “If one were to consider the answers given by the Messengers when asked about matters concerning the unseen or the Real, one would discover that the conciseness, clarity and all-encompassing nature of their responses is something that no philosopher, no matter how clever he is or how much study and research he engages in, will ever be able to match. “

Al-Kindi goes on to give an example in order to prove this point. He says, “Like the response of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, to the question which the idolaters asked him, believing that he would be unable to answer it. They asked, *‘Who will give life to bones when they are decayed?’*, for this was something that the questioners saw as being impossible. The One, the Real revealed to him: *‘Say, “He who made them in the first place will bring them back to life. He has total knowledge of each created thing; He Who produces fire for you from green trees so that you use them to light your fires.” Does He who created the heavens and earth not have the power to create the same again? Yes indeed! He is the Creator, the All-Knowing. His command when He desires a thing is just to say to it, “Be!” and it is.’* (36: 78-81)”

Al-Kindi next proceeds to give an explanation of these Qur’anic verses in order to expound further his thoughts about

the divine knowledge. He says, "Can clear and enlightened minds find clearer or more concise proof than this? For if we take as a fact that bones came into existence from nothing, then it is definitely possible that after they have fallen into disuse and turned into dust they can put together again. Gathering together that which has been scattered is much easier than creating it from nothing, although when we speak of the Actions of our Lord there is no such thing as easier or more difficult! The Power that created the bones in the first place is able to bring back that which He has destroyed.

As for the fact that bones came into existence after they had not been, that is something that we can see with our senses and does not require a great amount of thinking. A unbeliever, by asking this question, is in effect already admitting that he himself exists after having not existed, and therefore his bones also exist after having not existed; and he cannot deny that it would be possible for Allah to bring him back to life after he dies, or to reconstitute his bones.

In the next verse, Allah demonstrates that there are examples of things being created from their opposites in creation. He says: *'He Who produces fire for you from green trees so that you use them to light your fires.'* Fire is created from no fire, and heat is created from no heat. If a thing can come into being from its opposite, then its coming into being from its like is even more appropriate and possible. Allah says: *'Does He Who created the heavens and earth not have the power to create the same again?'* and answers the question inherent in the verse, saying: *'Yes indeed! He is the Creator, the All-Knowing.'*

This matter is clear and self-evident. Then Allah concluded the verse, knowing that denial of Allah's creation of the heavens and the earths remained in the hearts of the unbelievers, for they viewed Allah's actions in the light of the actions of mankind. They thought that Allah must act under the constraints of time like them, and they knew that if a man were to perform a greater job that job would take more time than a smaller one. So Allah makes it clear that all He has to do in order to bring something from non-existence into existence is to command it to be and it

is. He makes it clear that His Power is so infinitely great that He can create bodies from no bodies, that He can bring something into existence from nothing and that He does not need to work within time. He says: "*His command when He desires a thing is just to say to it, 'Be!' and it is.*" What Allah is saying is that He does desire that, and that things happen according to how He desires them to happen. His Names are Exalted above that which the unbelievers say about Him.

Al-Kindi concludes his exegesis of these noble verses with a few choice words that effectively support his ideas. He says, "Is there any person who, using human philosophy, is capable of expressing in such a clear and concise way and in so few words, that which Allah revealed to His Messenger in these verses? That bones are brought back to life after they have turned to dust; that His Power creates the like of the heavens and the earth; and that things can come from their opposites? Human logic and artifice are incapable of forming words such as these. The greatest minds of mankind cannot match their brevity, clarity and style; such words are veiled from partial intellects."

The source of this sort of knowledge, as Al-Kindi so clearly demonstrates, is neither intellectual nor sensory; it comes through Revelation. This knowledge is divine and is only for those whom Allah has chosen.

Chapter 8

Other Miracles

Allah's Protection of His Prophet

Allah says, glory be to Him: "*Allah will protect you from people.*" (5:67)

The author of *ar-Rawd al-unuf* relates the following: "The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, went out one day to see the Banu Nadir in order to ask their help in paying off a blood-debt. When they came together (the Banu Nadir), some of them said, "You will never again find Muhammad as close by as he is now. Is there a man amongst you who will go up onto the roof of this house and throw a rock on his head in order that we may be rid of him?" 'Amr ibn Jahsh replied that he would do it. News of this reached the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and so he took his leave of them immediately. Allah revealed the following verse about the situation and about the intentions of the Banu Nadir: "*You who believe, remember Allah's blessing upon you when certain people were on the verge of raising their hands against you and He held their hands back from you. Have taqwa of Allah. The believers should put their trust in Allah.*" (5:11)

The Prophet's supplications being answered

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in a sound *hadith qudsi*, informed his Community of a path which, if they followed it, Allah would answer their supplications. He said, speaking on behalf of his Lord: "Whoever attacks and takes one of My friends as an enemy, I declare war upon him. The most beloved way My slave can draw close to Me is by carrying out the actions I have made obligatory upon him. My slave contin-

ues to draw near to Me by performing supererogatory acts of worship until I love him; and when I love him, I become the hearing with which he hears, the sight with which he sees, the hand with which he strikes and the foot with which he walks. If he asks Me for something I will give it to him and if he seeks refuge in Me, I will grant him refuge." (al-Bukhari) If that is how Allah is with the Community as a whole, then it must be even more so as regards the Noblest of Creation.

There are many examples of Allah answering the supplications of His Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, such as the following.

Anas ibn Malik relates that "In the time of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, there was a period of drought. One day, whilst the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was delivering his Friday sermon, one of the desert Arabs stood up and called out to him, 'O Messenger of Allah, our crops and livelihood are being destroyed and our dependants are starving. Please ask Allah to give us rain.' The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, raised his hands to the sky, a sky in which there had not been a single wisp of cloud, and suddenly clouds the size of mountains gathered above us. The Prophet did not even have time to step down from his *minbar* before the rain came down and we saw it dripping from his beard.

The rain fell for the whole of that day, and the next day and the next, and continued to fall for an entire week until we gathered for the Friday prayer once again. The same desert Arab, or maybe another man, stood up again and said, "O Messenger of Allah, our buildings are being destroyed and our livestock and crops are drowning. Please ask Allah to come to our aid." The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, raised his hands in supplication and said, "O Allah, let the rain fall around us, not upon us." Wherever he pointed to in the sky the clouds cleared and the rain stopped falling. The city became like a bowl of clear sky surrounded on all sides by rain clouds. The valley became like a canal for a whole month. Everyone who came to the city spoke of the heavy rains." (al-Bukhari)

'Abdullah ibn 'Amr, may Allah be pleased with them both, relates that when the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, set out on the day of Badr in the company of three hundred and fifteen men, he said: "O Allah, my people are barefooted, so carry them. O Allah, my people are naked, so clothe them. O Allah, my people are starving, so feed them until they are full." Allah gave them victory, and when they returned there was not a man amongst them who did not possess a camel or even two, and who had not been fully clothed and fully fed. (Abu Dawud)

Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "I used to call my mother to Islam in the days when she was an idolatress. One day, whilst I was talking to her about Islam, she said something about the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, which I detested. I went to see the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in a state of tears. I said to him, 'Messenger of Allah, ask Allah to guide the mother of Abu Hurayra.' He said, 'O Allah, guide the mother of Abu Hurayra.' I went out rejoicing on account of the supplication of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. When I arrived at the door of my house, I found it ajar. My mother heard my footsteps and called out, 'Stay where you are, Abu Hurayra!' I heard the sound of running water. My mother performed an ablution, put on her robe and in her rush neglected to put on her headscarf. She opened the door and said, 'Abu Hurayra, I bear witness that there is no god except for Allah, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His Slave and Messenger.' I returned to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, weeping with joy. He praised Allah and spoke kindly." (Muslim)

Informing about the Unseen

Allah, glory be to Him, relates to us in the Qur'an that 'Isa, peace be upon him, said to his people: "*I will tell you what you eat and what you store up in your homes.*" (3:48)

Informing people about unseen events that do actually happen in a faraway place, whether that be in the past or the present, is not particularly unusual. However, informing people about unseen

events in the future is something miraculous, and Allah grants this ability to whomsoever He wills from amongst His righteous slaves.

We find examples of this in the Qur'an, which acts as a miracle for the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace: "Alif Lam Mim. *The Romans have been defeated in the land nearby, but after their defeat they will themselves be victorious in a few years' time. The affair is Allah's from beginning to end. On that day, the believers will rejoice in Allah's help. He grants victory to whomsoever He wills. He is the Almighty, the Most Merciful. That is Allah's promise. Allah does not break His promise. But most people do not know it. They know an outward aspect of the life of this world but are heedless of the Next World.*" (30: 1-6)

There are also *hadiths* in this regard. Examples include the following:

Abu Dharr, may Allah be pleased with him, relates that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "You will conquer Egypt, a land in which they have the *qirat*. When you conquer it, act well towards its people, for they have rights over you by *dhimma* and by family ties, or ties by marriage." (Muslim and Ahmad)

Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, came out one day and brought Hasan with him. He placed him on the *minbar* beside him and said, 'This son of mine is a master. Through him, Allah will make peace between two parties of the Muslims.' (al-Bukhari)

Anas ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, with tears in his eyes, announced the deaths of Ja'far and Zayd before news of their deaths had arrived. (al-Bukhari)

Jabir, may Allah be pleased with him, related: "The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had asked, "Do you have any carpets?" I said, "How is it possible that I could have carpets?" He replied, "You will have carpets." Later, when we did have some carpets, I would say to my wife, "Take your carpets away from me!" She would reply, "Did not the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, say to us that we would have carpets?", and so I left them alone'. (al-Bukhari) What

Jabir had wanted was to distance himself from those things that lead to luxury, but his wife had reminded him of what the Prophet, peace be upon him, had said to them and he fell silent.

Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, relates that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said: "While I was asleep, I dreamt that I was carrying two gold bracelets in my hands to which I had devoted my attention. It was revealed to me in my sleep that I should inflate them by blowing into them. I blew them up and they flew up into the air. I interpreted these two bracelets as indicating that two liars would rise up in the lands after me." One of those liars who appeared after the death of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was al-'Anasi, and the other was Musaylima the Liar, the inhabitant of al-Yamama. (al-Bukhari)

'A'isha, may Allah be pleased with her, said, "Fatima came to us walking in a gait similar to that of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said to her, 'Welcome, daughter.' Then he sat her down on his right (or on his left) and whispered some words to her, which made her cry. I said to her, 'Why are you crying?' Then he whispered to her again and she smiled. I said, 'I have never before seen joy and sadness so close together,' and I asked her what he had said. She said, 'It is not my place to divulge the secrets of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.'

After the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had been taken from us, I asked her once again. She replied, 'He whispered to me, "Jibril usually comes once a year to review the Qur'an with me, but this year he has already come to me twice. I know that the only reason he has done that is that my time has come. You will be the first of my household to be reunited with me," and so I cried. Then he said, "Are you not content with the fact that you will be the mistress of the women of the Garden (or of the women of the believers)?" and so I laughed (or smiled) because of that.'" (al-Bukhari)

Abu Hurayra related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "When Chosroes dies there will not be another Chosroes after him, and when Caesar dies there will not be another Caesar after him. By Allah, you will spend their wealth in the Way of Allah." (al-Bukhari)

Abu Musa relates that he was in the company of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, inside one of the orchards of Madina. A man came and asked permission to enter. The Prophet said, "Let him in and give him the good news of the Garden." The man was Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him. Then another man asked permission to enter. He said, "Let him in and give him the good news of the Garden." It was 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, so I opened the door for him and gave him the good news of the Garden. Then another man asked permission to enter. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, who had been reclining, sat up and said, "Open the door for him and give him the good news of the Garden on account of a trial that will befall him." It was 'Uthman, so I let him in, gave him the good news of the Garden and informed him what the Prophet had said. He replied, "Allah is the One whose Help is sought." (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Abu Sa'id al-Khudri said, "Abu Qatada told me that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said to 'Ammar, "The tyrannical party will kill you." (Muslim)

Abu Hamid as-Sa'idi said, "I set out with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, on the day of the Battle of Tabuk. He said, "There will be a severe gale in whose path no man will be able to stand, so whoever possesses a camel should make sure he ties it firmly." Abu Hamid said, "We tied our camels and that night a violent wind blew over us. One man stood up in it, and the wind picked him up and threw him onto the mountain of Tayy." (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Anas, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "We were in the company of 'Umar on the road between Makka and Madina when we saw the new moon. I was a man with very keen eyesight and was able to see the moon, but there was no one else who claimed that he could see it. I started saying to 'Umar, 'Can you not see it?' He could not see it but said, 'I will see it while I am lying down on my back on my bed.' He then started to speak to us about the people of Badr and said, 'The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, showed us the places in which the different people would die in Badr the day before the battle. He would say, "This is the spot where so-and-so will die tomorrow,

Allah willing, and this is the spot in which so-and-so will die tomorrow, Allah willing”.’

“Umar said, ‘By the One Who sent him with the Truth, not one of them met his death, anywhere but in the spot to which the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had pointed. They were all placed, one on top of the other, in a well and the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, came and stood above them and said to them, “O so-and-so, son of so-and-so, and O so-and-so, son of so-and-so, have you found that which your Lord promised you to be true? For I have found what Allah promised me to be true.” ‘Umar said, ‘Messenger of Allah, how can you speak to bodies whose spirits have departed from them?’ He replied, ‘You do not hear me any better than they do. The only difference is that they cannot answer.’” (Muslim)

Anas ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, said, “The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was delivering the Friday sermon and said to us: ‘Zayd took up the banner and was killed; then Ja’far took up the banner and was killed; then ‘Abdullah ibn Rawaha took up the banner and was killed, then Khalid ibn al-Walid took up the banner without being authorised to do so and was granted victory.’ Then he said, with his eyes overflowing with tears, ‘And it would not please me to have them with us now’ (or, in another variant, ‘it would please them to be amongst us’).” (al-Bukhari)

‘Abdu’r-Rahman as-Sulami related that ‘Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, said: “The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, sent Abu Mirthad al-Ghinawi, Az-Zubayr ibn al-‘Awwam, al-Miqdad and me all on horseback on a mission. He told us, ‘Keep going until you come to the meadow of Khakh. There you will find a woman of the idolaters who has on her person a letter from Hatib to the idolaters.’ ‘Ali continued, “We caught up with the woman in the place mentioned by the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, where she was travelling on her camel. We said to her, ‘The letter.’ She said, ‘I do not have a letter with me.’ We made her dismount from her camel and searched her luggage and bags, but we were unable to find a letter. We told her, ‘The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, never lies. You will give us the letter or we will strip you until we find it.’

“When she realised how determined we were, she let her protective cloak drop and took out the letter. We brought her to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and ‘Umar said, ‘Messenger of Allah, Hatib has betrayed Allah, His Messenger and the believers, so allow me to cut off his head.’ The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asked Hatib, ‘What made you do what you did?’ He replied, ‘By Allah, it is not for me to not be a believer in Allah and His Messenger. I only wanted to have some influence amongst the people, by means of which Allah would protect my family and property. And there is not one of your Companions who does not have family there, by means of whom Allah protects his immediate family and wealth.’ The Prophet said, ‘He has spoken the truth, so speak well of him and to him.’

“‘Umar said, ‘But he has betrayed Allah, His Messenger and the believers. Let me cut his head off.’ The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, ‘Is he not one of the people of Badr? Allah looked upon the people of Badr and said to them, ‘Do whatever you will, for I have made the Garden obligatory for you [or He said, ‘I have forgiven you’].’ ‘Umar’s eyes filled with tears and he said, ‘Allah and His Messenger know best’.” (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

A Qur’anic verse also came down about Hatib, which proves that he was one of the believers: *“You who believe, do not take My enemy and your enemy as friends, showing love for them when they have rejected.”* (60:1)

Sahl ibn Sa’d, may Allah be pleased with him, relates that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said on the day of the battle of Khaybar, ‘I will give this banner to a man at whose hands Allah will grant us victory – a man who loves Allah and His Messenger and whom Allah and His Messenger love.’ The next morning, the people came to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, hoping to be the one given the banner. He asked, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, ‘Where is ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib?’ They replied, ‘His eyes are troubling him.’ He said, ‘Send somebody to fetch him.’ He came before the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, who spat in his eyes. His eyes were cured so that

it was as if there had never been any pain. The Prophet gave him the banner and 'Ali said, 'Messenger of Allah, shall I fight them until they are like us?' He said, 'Proceed slowly until you come to the square in which they are gathered, then call them to Islam and let them know what is obligatory for them and what is due to Allah. For, by Allah, that Allah guide a single man through your efforts is better for you than for you to have red-coloured camels [considered to be the best sort of camel].' (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Anas ibn Malik relates that his aunt, Umm Haram bint Milhan, said: "One day, the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, fell asleep nearby and woke up smiling. I asked, 'What made you smile?' He said, 'People from my Community were shown to me, fighting in the Way of Allah, riding the waves of this sea as if they were kings seated on their thrones.' She said, 'Ask Allah to make me one of them.' He made supplication for her and then went to sleep again. The very same thing happened again and she asked him the same question and replied in the same way. Then she again asked him to ask Allah to make her one of them and he replied, 'You will be one of the first of them.' She set out with her husband 'Ubada ibn as-Samit, fighting in the Way of Allah, when the Muslims first sailed the seas in the reign of Mu'awiya. When they had completed their raid, they returned to Syria and disembarked. A riding beast was brought to her for her to ride, but it struck her and knocked her to the ground and she died." (*at-Tajrid as-sarib*)

Healing the Sick

Allah relates to us in the Qur'an the words of 'Isa, peace be upon him, to his people: "*I will heal the blind and lepers, and bring the dead to life, by Allah's permission.*" (3:48) We all believe that none of this is possible without Allah's permission. The following miracles of this kind occurred at the hands of our Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace:

Muhammad ibn Hatib, may Allah be pleased with him, relates that his mother, Umm Jamil bint al-Muhallil, said: "Coming towards Abyssinia, at a distance of a day or two's travel from

Madina, I stopped to cook myself some food. While I was cooking, the firewood ran out, so I went out to search for some more. While I was gone, you grabbed hold of the cooking pot and it fell onto your arm. I brought you to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and said, 'I ransom you with my father and mother, Messenger of Allah. This is Muhammad ibn Hatib.' He spat into your mouth and wiped his hands over your face and made supplications for you. Then he started to spit upon your arms and say, 'Make the pain go away, Lord of mankind, and give healing, for You are the Healer and there is no healing except Yours'. Even before I left his presence, your arm was already healed'." (Ahmad)

'Ali, may Allah be pleased with him and ennoble his face, said, "From the time that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, spat in them, I have not suffered from redness of the eyes." (Ahmad)

Al-Bara', may Allah be pleased with him, said: "One moonlit night, I came to some steps and put my foot down to step over them, but I fell and broke my calf. I bandaged it with my turban and made my way back to my companions and then to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. I told him what had happened and he instructed me to stretch out my leg. I stretched it out, he wiped his hands over it, and it was as if there had never been anything wrong with it." (al-Bukhari)

Yazid ibn Abi 'Ubayd said: "I saw a slap mark on the calf of Salama ibn al-Akwa', may Allah be pleased with him, and asked him, 'Abu Muslim, what is that slap mark?' He replied, 'I was struck there on the day of Khaybar, and people started to say, 'Salama has been wounded'. I went to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and he blew over it three times. The wound has not caused me any hurt since that time'." (al-Bukhari)

Multiplying the quantities of water

The miracles of water being multiplied are *mutawatir* if we consider them as a whole. For every occasion that a miracle of this nature occurred, a number of the Companions have related it.

These miracles have been transmitted down to us through the soundest books and from the most trustworthy sources. We therefore have no doubt as to their veracity.

'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "We used to consider miracles a blessing, whereas you consider them a cause for fear. We were travelling with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, when our water started to run low. He said, 'Search for some water.' They brought him a vessel in which there was a small amount of water. He inserted his hand into the vessel and said, 'Come to the blessed and pure water. The blessing is from Allah,' and we saw the water welling up from between his fingers, may Allah bless him and grant him peace." (al-Bukhari)

Hashim ibn al-Qasim related from Sulayman that Thabit stated: "I said to Anas, 'O Abu Hamza, tell us something wondrous that you have seen with your own eyes, not somebody else's experience.' He said, 'One time, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, prayed the *Dhuhr* prayer and then went out and sat in the spot in which Jibril, peace be upon him, used to come to him. Bilal came and called the *adhan* for the 'Asr prayer. Those who had a family in Madina were able to do *wudu*' in the places belonging to them, but some men of the Muhajirun did not have any place or family in Madina. A wide-rimmed goblet containing some water was brought to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, put his hand in the cup, but the cup was not big enough for the whole of his hand, so he managed to fit four fingers inside it. Then he said to them, keeping his hand in the cup, 'Come closer and perform *wudu*.' They started to come forward to perform *wudu*', until not one of them remained who had not performed *wudu*' from the cup.' I asked him, 'How many were there, Abu Hamza?' 'Between seventy and eighty,' he replied." (*Tabaqat* of Ibn Sa'd)

'Abdullah said: "We were travelling with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and we were unable to find any water. A small drinking vessel containing water was brought and the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, put his hand in it and spread out his fingers. I

saw water spring forth from between the fingers of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and he said, 'Come to perform *wudu*' and to the blessing of Allah Almighty.' Al-A'mash stated that Salim ibn Abi Ja'd said, 'I asked Jabir ibn 'Abdullah how many people were present that day. He replied that there were one thousand five hundred.'" (al-Bukhari)

Anas ibn Malik relates that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was in az-Zawra' (a well-known place in Madina near where the market was) and a vessel of water was brought to him, which was not even sufficient for the one who owned it. He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, instructed his Companions to perform *wudu*' from it, and placed the palm of his hand in the water. The water started to well up between his fingers and from the tips of his fingers, until every person had made *wudu*.' I asked Anas, 'How many of you were there?' 'Three hundred,' he replied." (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

According to 'Imran ibn Husayn: "One time, we were travelling with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, at night. Towards the end of the night we stopped to rest, and there is no time at which it is sweeter to stop than that. Nothing woke us up until the heat of the sun started beating down on us. The first to wake up was so-and-so, then so-and-so and then so-and-so. The fourth person to wake was 'Umar ibn al-Khattab. It was our custom to let the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, be when he was asleep until he woke up himself, because we did not know what might be happening to him in his sleep. But 'Umar, a hard man with a strong voice, when he saw what had befallen us, said the *takbir* in such a voice that he woke the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. When the people saw that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was awake, they complained to him about what had happened to them. He said, 'There is no harm done. Move from this place.' (Because it was a place in which Shaytan had caused them to miss the prayer). When we had left and gone a short distance, the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asked for some water to perform *wudu*', and did so. Then the call for the prayer was called and he prayed with the people. When the prayer had finished, he

turned around and noticed a man standing on his own who had not joined in the prayer. He asked the man, 'What stopped you from praying with us?' He replied, 'Messenger of Allah, I am in a state of major ritual impurity and there is no water to perform *ghusl* with.' He said, 'You must perform *tayammum*, then.'

"Then the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, continued on the journey and people came to him and complained of thirst. He dismounted, and called 'Ali and another person to him. He said to them, 'Go and look for some water for us.' They set out and met a woman sitting on her camel, between two large leather water-skins. They said to her, 'Where is the source of the water?' She said, 'I drew the water at this very time yesterday and the men of my people are away looking for water.'

"They said to her, 'Come with us.' She said, 'To where?' They replied, 'To the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.' 'Is that the one they call the Heretic?', she asked. 'He is the one you refer to,' they replied. They brought her to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and told him what she had said. They asked her to dismount from her camel and then the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, asked for a vessel and poured some water into it from the mouths of the two water-skins, then put it in his mouth, swilled it around, spat it back into the vessel and poured it back into the water-skins, tied up the mouths of the water-skins and shook them up, then opened up their pouring spouts. Then he called people to come and drink and water their riding beasts. Every person who wanted to drink drank and every person who wanted to water his riding beast watered his riding beast. The last thing he did was to give a vessel of water to the one who was in a state of major ritual impurity. He said, 'Go and pour this over you.'

"This whole time the woman was standing by, watching him do all of this with her water and, by Allah, water had been removed from it, but it seemed to us that it contained more water than when he started taking water from it. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'Gather together provisions for her.' They gathered together for her dates, flour and *sawiq*, until they had a large amount of food, which they put in some cloth for her and loaded it onto her camel in front of her.

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said to her, 'By Allah, know that we have not decreased your wealth in any way, but it is Allah, glory be to Him, who has watered us.'

"She came to her people, having missed her appointment with them. 'What kept you?' they asked her. She said, 'Something wondrous. Two men came upon me and took me to the one they call 'the Heretic'. He did such-and-such and such-and-such with my water, and I swear by Allah that he is either the greatest wizard between this the earth and that (pointing with two fingers to the sky) or he is truly the Messenger of Allah.' After that, the Muslims began to raid the pagan tribes around her, but had not yet raided her people's herd of camels. One day she told them, 'I do not think these people are letting us be on purpose. I think it is time we became Muslim'. Her people obeyed her and entered Islam." (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Jabir, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "On the day of Hudaybiyya, the people were afflicted by thirst. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had an open bowl in front of him from which he made *wudu*'. The people came up to him and said, 'We have no water with which to make *wudu*' or to drink except that which is in your bowl.' The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, placed his hand in the bowl, and the water started to flow out from between his fingers as if they were springs. We all drank and made *wudu*'." Jabir was asked, "How many of you were there?" He replied, "Even if we had been one hundred thousand it would have been enough for all of us. There were fifteen hundred of us." (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

***Baraka* (increase and blessing) with regard to food**

The *hadiths* about *baraka*, 'increase and blessing', with regard to food are many, and are both sound and well known. If we take them as a whole, then we can say that they are *mutawatir*. Here follow some of the miracles of this nature that happened at the hand of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

Hashim ibn al-Qasim relates from Sulayman that Thabit said: "One of the woman of the *Ansar* made a small meal and then asked her husband to go to the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, and invite him in secret to the meal. He came to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and said to him, 'Messenger of Allah, So-and-so has cooked a small meal for you, and I would like you to come and join us.' The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said to the people, 'Accept the invitation of Abu So-and-so.'

The husband said: 'I returned, dragging my feet in the dust, ashamed at the small amount of food I had left in my home and the great number of people who had come with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, to eat it. I told my wife, 'We have been shamed. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, has come and everyone has come with him.' She said, 'Did I not tell you to invite him in secret?' I replied that I had done so. 'The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, knows best,' she said. They kept on coming until they had filled the house, the outer room and the courtyard. Then a handful of food was brought and placed in front of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, began to spread the food around in the vessel and said that which Allah willed him to say. Then he said, 'Come close and eat. When one of you has eaten his fill, let him move aside for his companion.' As one man stood up and left another took his place, until none of those who had been in the house remained. Then he said, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, 'Summon the people who are in the outer room.' They came and in turn sat down to eat and stood up to leave, until they had all eaten their full. Then he said, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, 'Summon the people who are in the courtyard.' They did the same as those before them; and after they had all finished that which had been in the vessel at the start remained as it had been. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'Eat from it, and feed your neighbours.'" (*Tabaqat* of Ibn Sa'd)

'Abdu'r-Rahman ibn Abi 'Amra al-Ansari relates from his father: "We were on a raid with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah

bless him and grant him peace, when people began to feel pangs of hunger. The people asked permission from the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, to slaughter their riding camels. They said, 'By means of their slaughter, Allah may bring us to our journey's end.' When 'Umar ibn al-Khattab saw that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was planning to give them permission to slaughter some of their riding camels, he said, 'Messenger of Allah, how will it be for us if we slaughter? We could meet the enemy both hungry and on foot. However, if you were to summon the people to bring the provisions that they have left, gather them together and ask Allah for *baraka*, then Allah will bring us to our journey's end by your supplication (or bring us *baraka* because of your supplication).'

"The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, called for the people to bring their remaining provisions and they started coming, some bringing a handful of grain and some bringing a little more. The most that was brought by anyone was a *sa'* of dried dates. The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, gathered all the food together and made supplication to Allah in the way that Allah had willed him to supplicate. Then he called the soldiers to bring all their containers and stuff them full of food. Every container was filled and there was even food left over. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, smiled so broadly that his molars showed. He said, 'I bear witness that there is no God but Allah and I bear witness that I am the Messenger of Allah. Any slave of Allah who believes in them both will be sheltered from the Fire on the Day of Rising.'" (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

'Abdu'r-Rahman ibn Abi Bakr said, "There were one hundred and thirty of us in the company of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, when he asked us if any of us had any food. A man came forward with a *sa'* or so of grain, which he turned into dough. Then another man came forward, a tall idolater with dishevelled hair, driving a sheep in front of him. The Prophet, peace be upon him, asked, 'Is it for sale or do you want to present it as a gift?' 'It is for sale,' he replied. The sheep was purchased from him and prepared, and the Prophet ordered that the greater part of the belly be roasted. By Allah, there was not a

single one of the one hundred and thirty men for whom the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, did not cut a slice from the sheep's belly. If anyone was present it was given to him and if anyone was absent it was stored away for him. It was divided up into two large bowls, from which we all ate until we were satisfied. After we had finished, there was still some of it remaining in the bowls, so we loaded them onto a camel and carried them with us." (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Jabir relates that Umm Malik al-Fihriyya used to give the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, clarified butter in one of her butter-skins. One time, when she had nothing in her house, her children asked her for something to eat. She made for the butter-skin in which she used to give butter to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and squeezed out the butter to make a broth for her children until she had squeezed it dry. When she came to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, he asked, 'Did you squeeze it dry?' She replied that she had and he told her, 'If you had left a bit, then it would all still be left for you.' (Muslim)

Abu Iyas said: "We had gone out on a raid with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, when we became so affected by fatigue and hunger that we considered slaughtering our riding camels. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, ordered us to bring to him any provisions that we might have, which we did. Then he placed some leather mats on the ground and gathered the provisions upon them. I leant forward to estimate how much food there was and saw that the mound of food was only about the same size as a kneeling goat, whereas there were fourteen hundred of us. And yet we all ate until we were full, and we filled our sacks with the food." (Muslim)

Jabir ibn 'Abdullah said: "One day, whilst we were working with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in the trench, I happened to have a small, fat goat. I said to my wife, 'We should cook for the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.' I instructed her to do so and she ground up some barley to make flour and made bread with it and I slaughtered the goat. We roasted it for the Messenger of Allah,

may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and when evening came and the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was preparing to leave the trench (for we used to work in the trench during the daytime and then return to our families in the evening), I said to him, 'Messenger of Allah, I have cooked a small goat for you which we had in our possession and baked some barley bread.' I wanted the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, to come with me to my home, but I wanted him to come alone.

"After I had given him my invitation he replied that he would come and ordered a crier to cry out, 'Go with the Messenger of Allah to the house of Jabir!' I said to myself, 'We belong to Allah and to Him we will return.' The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, came and with him came all the people. He sat down and we brought the food out to him. He asked for Allah to put *baraka* in the food, said '*Bismillah*' and then ate. Then the people came to him, group after group. Whenever one group had finished eating, they left and the next group came and this continued until all of the people who had been working in the trench had eaten." (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

According to Anas: "Abu Talha said to Umm Sulaym, 'I heard the voice of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and he sounded weak. I know that he is suffering from hunger, so do you have anything to give to him?' She replied that she had, and brought out some small round loaves of barley bread, wrapped them in one end of one of her scarves, placed them in my arms, wrapped the other end of the scarf around me and sent me to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. I brought the bread and found the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, sitting amongst the people in the mosque. I greeted them and the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asked me, 'Did Abu Talha send you?' 'Yes,' I replied. 'With food?' he asked. 'Yes,' I replied. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, told those around him, 'Stand up. Let us go!' He left, and I went before them and informed Abu Talha that they were coming. Abu Talha said, 'Umm Sulaym, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, has come and people

have come with him; but we have nothing with which to feed them all.' 'Allah and His Messenger know best,' she said. Abu Talha went out to meet the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and came with him.

"The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'Bring whatever you have, Umm Sulaym.' She brought forth the bread, which the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, then ordered to be broken up into pieces. Umm Sulaym then brought out a butter-skin from which she extracted butter and made a broth. Then the Messenger of Allah said what Allah willed him to say, asking Allah for blessing in the food, and ordered that ten people be permitted to enter. They were let in, ate to their satisfaction and then departed. Then the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'Permit ten to enter, and then the next ten, and so on.' Every person ate their fill, and there were between seventy and eighty men present." (Muslim)

Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "On the day of the Battle of Tabuk, severe hunger afflicted the people. 'Umar said, 'Messenger of Allah, call everyone to bring forth any provisions they have left, then ask Allah to put blessing in the food'. He replied that he would, called for a leather mat which was spread out on the ground, and called on the people to bring forth their remaining provisions. Some people came with handfuls of corn, some came with handfuls of dates and some came with small pieces of bread. This continued until there was a small amount of food gathered together on the mat. Then the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asked Allah to put blessing in the food and said to the people, 'Take the food and fill your containers'. The people came and filled their containers until every container in the camp had been filled. Then the people ate their fill and there was a bit of food left over. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and I bear witness that I am the Messenger of Allah. No slave who meets Allah on the day of Rising, and who believes in them both without any doubt in his heart, will be prevented from entering Paradise.'" (Muslim)

Jabir, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "My father died and was in debt at the time of his death. I asked his creditors to take some dates in exchange for that which he owed, but they refused. I went to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and told him, 'My father was martyred at the Battle of Uhud and left a lot of unpaid debts. I would like the creditors to see you.' He said, 'Go and put the dates that you have into separate piles'. I did as he said and then invited him to come. When they saw the Messenger of Allah, they immediately bombarded me with their claims. When he saw what they were doing, the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, went around the biggest heap of dates three times, then sat by it and said, 'Call your creditors.' He measured out dates for each of them until Allah settled my father's accounts. I, myself would have been pleased if Allah had settled my father's debts and I had returned to my sisters without a single date, but Allah kept all the heaps whole. I looked at the heap which the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had been sitting beside, and it was as if it had not been decreased by a single date.' (al-Bukhari)

The pining of the tree-trunk

Jabir ibn 'Abdullah, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to stand beside a tree or date-palm on the day of *Jumu'a*. One day, an *Ansari* woman or man asked, "Messenger of Allah, shall we make a *minbar* for you?" "If you want," he replied. So they built a *minbar* for him. When the day of *Jumu'a* came, he ascended onto the *minbar* and the date-palm cried like a child. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, descended from the *minbar* and embraced it while it continued to moan like a baby being comforted. He said, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, 'It was crying because it could no longer hear the *dhikr* of Allah that was mentioned beside it.' (Bukhari)

The author of *ash-Shifa* said, speaking about the incident of the yearning tree-trunk, "It is famous in itself and well-known, and the *hadith* relating it is *mutawatir*. The *Sahih* collections relate it.

It is related by about ten of the Companions, including Ubayy ibn Ka'b, Jarir ibn 'Abdullah, Anas ibn Malik, 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas, Sahl ibn Sa'd, Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, Burayda, Umm Salama, and al-Muttalib ibn Abi Wada'a. All of them related a version of this *hadith*. According to al-Tirmidhi, the *hadith* of Anas is sound.

"I see you behind my back"

Abu Hurayra relates that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Do you see my *qibla* here? For by Allah, I am fully aware of your humility and your bowing, as I can see behind me" [i.e. it was as if he had eyes in the back of his head]. (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Anas narrated, "The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, would turn to face us before beginning the prayer and say to us, "Keep the lines full and straight, for I can see behind me." (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Chapter 9

Indications of Prophethood in the Miracle of the Ascent and Night Journey

Normally, when people speak about the Night Journey and the Ascent (*Isra'* and *Mi'raj*), and its miraculous nature, they talk about the great distances travelled, or about the ascent from one heaven to the next, all of which occurred in minutes and hours, not days or months.

It is not in doubt that this aspect of the Ascent and Night Journey is miraculous, but there are other aspects of this great miracle that serve as signs and indications of the truthfulness of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace; aspects that focus on moral rectitude, purifying the self, keeping the family in order, and reforming society. Just as a person's life articulates his truthfulness or falseness, so too do his teachings. Therefore, a person who has an open heart and mind will, in the same way that he would study someone's life and conduct, also look at that person's teachings so that his judgement on that person may be well-informed and accurate.

For this reason, we have tried to cover all aspects of the Ascent and Night Journey in this chapter. We have especially gone into great detail in our discussion of the spiritual and ethical aspects of this miracle, in order to eliminate the preconceptions that some have that the Ascent and Night Journey is all about the travelling of great distances and ascending to the heavens and nothing else. In fact, it is an obligation upon us to discuss all of these different aspects in order to establish firmly the physical and metaphysical signs that prove the truth of prophethood.

Before commencing our discussion on the Ascent and Night Journey, we would first like to apologise for the large amount of detail that we have gone into. We have done this on purpose, however, as it is part of the proofs of prophethood that the

Traditions of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and the place of his Message be characterised by noble character and sublime spirituality; and that the path, which takes the life of a society to its highest levels, be an important component of his Message. That is the reason why we have gone into so much detail.

The story of the Night Journey should not merely be taken as the tale of a strange journey that went far beyond normal human experience, but should also be considered as an illustration of many of the different elements of the life of the Muslim in his ascent towards Allah. It is a journey that did not end and will never end; for it signifies a Muslim's journey towards Allah. Both the miraculous nature of the Night Journey and the good character that characterises it make it a proof of prophethood.

Allah says: "*Glory be to Him who took His slave on a journey by night from al-Masjid al-Haram to the Furthest Mosque, whose surroundings We have blessed, in order to show him some of Our Signs. He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing.*" (17:1) Allah also says: "*By the star when it descends, your companion is not misguided or misled; nor does he speak from whim. It is nothing but Revelation revealed, taught him by one immensely strong, possessing power and splendour. He stood there stationary there on the highest horizon. Then he drew near and hung suspended. He was two bow-lengths away or even closer. Then He revealed to His slave what He revealed. His heart did not lie about what he saw. What! Do you dispute with him about what he saw? He saw him again another time by the Lote-tree of the Final Limit, beside which is the Garden of Refuge, when that which covered the Lote-tree covered it. His eye did not waver, nor did he look away. He saw some of the Greatest Signs of his Lord.*" (53:1-18)

These are the Qur'anic verses that refer to the Night Journey. As for *hadiths* that speak of it, there are many, and more than twenty-six Companions related them. Later, many of the scholars of *hadith* included these accounts in their collections. Indeed, as-Suyuti included most of them in his book, *al-Khasa'is al-kubra*.

It is not our intention in this chapter to detail all of the things that happened in the Night Journey, as most Muslims already know this. Our intention is, as we have already stated, to focus on what it can teach us about good character. We want to focus on

the significance of the Night Journey, and not merely on what happened.

A summary of what happened that night is as follows:

While the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was sleeping, Jibril came to him, woke him up and went outside with him. There he found a white riding-mount, which was Buraq. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was mounted on Buraq. Then the Buraq went out, closely accompanied by Jibril. As the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "He did not leave me behind and I did not leave him behind." They continued on until they reached Jerusalem. There he found Ibrahim, Musa, 'Isa and a number of other Prophets, peace be upon them all. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, led them in prayer, then two vessels were brought to him: one containing wine and the other milk. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was asked to choose between them and he so he took hold of the vessel containing milk and drank from it, leaving the one containing wine. Thereupon, Jibril said to him, "You have been guided to the natural form (*fitra*), as has your Community. Wine is unlawful for you."

The books of *Sira* relate that an angel came to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, on the night of the Night Journey and opened up his breast. Then he washed his heart with the water of Zamzam, brought a golden bowl full of wisdom and faith and poured it into his noble heart. Then he sealed up his chest and went away.

The Night Journey took him to Jerusalem. After the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had completed his visit to Jerusalem, he was taken up to Heaven in the Ascent. He ascended each heaven in turn until he had gone beyond all of the heavens and reached the Lote Tree of Furthest Limit; to a place two bow-lengths away or even closer. There he greeted his Lord saying, "Greetings are for Allah, as are prayers and good deeds."

Thereupon Allah, glory be to Him, returned his greeting, saying, "Peace be upon you, O Prophet, and the mercy and blessings of Allah."

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: "Peace be upon us and upon the righteous slaves of Allah. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, One without partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His Slave and Messenger."

In those eternal moments – moments that are impossible to describe adequately – Allah, glory be to Him, made the ritual prayer incumbent upon the Islamic Community.

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, conveyed the instructions of his Lord and spoke of Allah's great blessing upon him. The idolaters rejected what he had to say and raised their objections in disbelief. The idolaters then informed Abu Bakr about what the Prophet had said regarding his Night Journey, sneering in their disbelief. He told them, "By Allah, if that is what he said then he has spoken the truth. What is so astonishing about that? For, by Allah, he tells me every day that communications come to him from the heavens to the earth in a single moment of the day or night and I believe him – and that is more extraordinary than that which has left you in bemusement." Later, the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said to Abu Bakr, "You, Abu Bakr, are the *Siddiq* (the one who testifies to the truth)." This was the occasion on which he received that name.

This is an abridged version of the account of this event that can be found in the books of *Sira*, and that is confirmed by the Qur'an. Ibn Ishaq attempted to explain the underlying wisdom of this event and he prefaced his account of it with the following precious words: "If we consider the place in which the Night Journey took place and what people have said about it, we will find that it is a test and close examination and an event that demonstrates Allah's Power and Sovereignty. In this account there is a lesson for men of intelligence; and guidance, mercy and strength for those who believe in Allah and affirm Him. It was certainly an act of Allah: he was taken in the night in the way that He willed in order to show to him those of His Greatest Signs that He wanted him to see. And, indeed, he witnessed part of Allah's Command and witnessed His great sovereignty and the power with which He does what He wills." (Ibn Ishaq)

Imam al-Busairi said in his blessed *Hamziyya*:

“He travelled over great tracts of the earth,
and traversed the heavens above it in his Night Journey.
So praise the night in which
the Chosen One sat upon the Buraq,
And ascended on it to two bow-lengths away –
that is the established dominion.
He ascended to ranks that people do not even aspire to
in their wildest hopes,
and what was behind them was behind them.
Then in gratitude he told the people
of the great blessing of his Lord,
And challenged them. Thereupon, everyone with doubt
in his heart doubted him, for does scum remain
after a torrent of water has swept past?”

When one type of person hears the account of this mighty event, he only considers its outer aspect and likes to argue about the physical way in which it happened. Did it occur while he was awake or while he was asleep? Did he travel in spirit and body or only in spirit? Did he travel by night or by day? These sorts of questions are the ones that a person of weak faith considers the most important.

There is another kind of person, who when he hears the account of this event, its true significance suffuses to the depths of his heart. He naturally starts to reflect on its deeper meanings and sublime spiritual nature. He is able to grasp that the account of this event contains teachings that should not merely be read in passing, but require a person's full attention. Here are some of the things we can understand from this account:

1. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was the last of a chain of lights sent to the world by Allah at different intervals, to return mankind to right guidance, lead them to Allah, raise the believers up on the sacred ladder, rung by rung, and to help those who are worthy to reach the perfection desired by Divine Guidance.

The Book that was revealed to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace – the Qur'an – was the last and most complete of the Divine Books and has supremacy among them.

Therefore, since the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, embodies the good characteristics of the most complete of the Divine Books, he is the most complete Messenger. That is why he led the other Prophets and Messengers in prayer in Jerusalem. Also, because he, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is the most complete of the Messengers, he must also be the closest of them to Allah, glory be to Him.

He went beyond the earth and the heavens – indeed he went beyond the whole of existence – and came to a place that no man has ever reached. Not even Jibril, peace be upon him, had come to that place. The Prophet, peace be upon him, reached a station two bow-lengths away or even closer.

Just as the account of the Ascent has a spatial significance – in that it states that the Prophets and Messengers are present in the heavens and that the Messenger passed through each of these heavens one by one, and passed by the Prophets one by one – it also has a spiritual significance. Indeed, the spiritual nature of the event is the more important one. The spiritual significance of the Ascent lies in the fact that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, had, in the course of his ascent to Allah, reached levels of spirituality that went beyond Adam in the first heaven, then beyond 'Isa, then beyond Musa, peace be upon them all, and so on and so forth. His level of spirituality continued to rise until he even went beyond Ibrahim, peace be upon him, in the seventh heaven.

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, went beyond all of that. He went beyond existence in its totality and came to the Lote Tree of the Furthest Limit. Then he went on until he reached a point that even the closest angels to Allah and the Prophets and Messengers have never reached, until he was two bow-lengths away or even closer and saw some of the Greatest Signs of his Lord. This is the station of the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

Some people, however, take us down from these high horizons, exalted heavens and divine expanses and argue with us about the physical reality of the Ascent and the Night Journey: was it a dream or did it happen in a waking state? I ask forgiveness of Allah and repent if I have done such a thing. If that sort of argumenta-

tion indicates anything, it indicates weakness of faith in the heart of the arguer.

A large amount of religious poetry has been composed about the Night Journey. The following is a short extract from a poem by Ibrahim 'Abdu'l-Fattah:

“By the star when it fell, guidance has risen
like a lit-up star swimming in the sky.
Your companion has not gone astray and does not speak
except to say that which has come to him in revelation.
The heart was truthful, so do not argue,
for he saw the greatest signs filling the horizon.
They asked, ‘How can he go up into the sky when
there is nothing but air there?’ Do they not smell the air?
They understand things only by that which they see
in front of them,
and the miracles are that they are not behind them.
Do not consider the Prophet’s affair as you consider
your own affairs, for that would be like the earth
competing with sky to see which is higher.
A breeze from Paradise surrounded his mount,
so does he feel constriction or tiredness?
Behind this existence is the Power of the Creator;
His Majesty and Exaltedness are beyond conception.
Allah is too Great for us to set limits to His Bounty,
for His gift to His slaves is beyond expectation.
Do they belittle the Majesty of a Powerful Lord,
in whose hands lies power over life and death?”

2. In addition to the things we have mentioned above regarding the station of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, which cause our esteem and love for him to increase. there are other things within the story of the Night Journey which we may take as elements of a moral code. The story indicates the unbreakable bond between the *Deen* and good conduct, for the truth is that in the Islamic ethos good character and *Deen* are inseparable. The source and basis of good character is the *Deen*, and it is a vital part of it: its source is Divine.

Nowadays some people are trying to suggest other sources for good character: they say, for example, that it is the conscience that governs morality. This view is obviously mistaken, for clearly a person's conscience is moulded and raised by the culture, environment and epoch in which he is nurtured. Conscience is produced, just like forgeries and the like. It is therefore a faulty way of weighing up character.

Others suggest that the goodness of a person's conduct may be determined by weighing up his actions against the common good. However, this term 'common good' is not really defined and everyone who uses the term is merely espousing an ideology based on his own ideas, regardless of whether those ideas are distorted or not. 'Common good', therefore, is not a safe and guaranteed way of assessing someone's character.

Then there are those who suggest that the goodness of a person's conduct may be found by weighing up his actions against his own personal interests, or against the amount of pleasure that he might obtain by doing it. All of these philosophies and ideologies originated in the West, in either Europe or America, when those lands deviated from a true understanding – became secular and fell into a moral coma.

As for the East, or to be more precise, Islam – it considered religious principles to be the criterion by which the goodness of a person's character should be measured. These elements of good conduct have their source in the Qur'an and are expanded upon in the story of the Night Journey. That is the way that a person whose life is governed by faith should live his life, and that is what we would now like to now discuss.

The Path of Life described in Traditions dealing with the Night Journey

There are many narrations that deal with what happened during the Ascent and Night Journey, some of which are sound and some *hasan*. These narrations were gathered in the collections of the imams of *Hadith*, may Allah be pleased with them. Some of the imams included variants not mentioned by others, but the essence of each of the versions remained the same and the details men-

tioned were not contradictory. Some of the imams related the events in a condensed form and others went into much more detail. Each story mentioned in the *badiths* is related by many different narrators, but the essence of each story is completely consistent. Therefore, it is possible for us to say that the essence of the story of the Night Journey is *mutawatir*. Indeed, if we accept the opinion of Ibn Hazm, who stated that a *badith* is *mutawatir* if it is related by two or more narrators, then even the smaller details of the Night Journey are *mutawatir*. In addition to this, the event is confirmed by the Mighty Qur'an.

We have said all this to demonstrate to the reader that we are on firm ground when we say that the accounts of the Night Journey provide us with a platform on which we may base our lives, even when we have based our conclusions on the small details present in those accounts, because they are all taken from solid narrations.

The beginning of the Path of Life: Repentance

In some of the accounts of the Night Journey, including that found in al-Bukhari, the journey begins with the breast of the prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, being split open. Anas ibn Malik related that Ubayy ibn Ka'b told him that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: "While I was in Makka, the roof of my house opened up and Jibril descended upon me. He opened up my chest and washed my heart with the water of Zamzam. Then he brought forth a golden bowl filled with wisdom and faith and poured it into my heart. Then he closed up my chest." (Ahmad)

This event, as far as we are concerned, is that of repentance. This cleansing of the heart of the Prophet, an incident that happening to him a number of times during his life, is, for his followers, equivalent to repentance.

The truth of the matter is that the life of a Muslim in his journey towards Allah begins with repentance, and there is no level below it. The repentance that we are referring to here is sincere repentance. Allah says: "*You who believe, repent sincerely to Allah.*" (66:8)

In this verse Allah guides us by indicating to us that the desired form of repentance is sincere repentance. However, for repentance to be truly sincere, certain conditions must be fulfilled. An-Nawawi mentioned these conditions in his splendid book *Riyad as-salihin*. He said, "It is obligatory for a person to repent of every wrong action he commits. If the wrong action he commits is one that is only between him and Allah (such as not praying or fasting) and does not impinge upon any other person's rights, then repentance has three conditions:

1. That he stop committing the wrong action for which he is repenting.
2. That he regret doing that action.
3. That he resolve to never do that action again.

If any of these three conditions are not met, then his repentance is not valid. If he commits a wrong action that impinges on the right of a fellow human being such as stealing or assault, then four conditions must be met: he must fulfil the three conditions mentioned above and also make amends to the person he wronged. If he took money from someone then he must return it; if he falsely accused someone, then he must apologise openly to him; and if he slandered someone then he should speak out to clear that person's name."

Because repentance is the first rung on the ladder that takes people up to Allah, because it is obligatory for every wrong action, because it erases all wrong actions that a person committed before making it, and because it places man, if he does it with sincerity, at the station of purity and innocence, Islam places great emphasis on it. Allah says: "*Turn to Allah every one of you, believers, so that perhaps you may have success.*" (24:31)

Allah has opened a door for those who make sincere repentance, and left it wide open. He says, in a literary style exuding mercy and compassion: "*Say: 'My slaves, you who have transgressed against yourselves, do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Truly Allah forgives all wrong actions. He is the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.'*" (39:50)

Allah forgives our wrong actions when we repent, and He explains this in the verses that follow this one, directing us along the Path: "*Turn in repentance to your Lord and submit to Him before*

punishment comes upon you, for then you cannot be helped. Follow the best that has been sent down to you from your Lord before the punishment comes upon you suddenly when you are not expecting it." (51-52)

Allah, glory be to Him, follows up these Qur'anic instructions in a compassionate and merciful fashion when He says in a long *badith qudsi*: "My slaves, you commit wrong actions by night and by day, but I forgive all wrong actions. So ask forgiveness of Me and I will forgive you."

The *badiths* of the Prophet all contain the same message. He said, may Allah bless him and grant him peace: "Allah stretches out His Hand during the night to accept the repentance of the one who committed wrong actions in the day, and stretches out His Hand during the day to accept the repentance of the one who committed wrong actions in the night."

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, accepted that it was impossible for there not to be at least some wrong actions and said, "Every son of Adam commits wrong actions." However, he then indicated the criterion which makes some wrongdoers better than others, and brings them to good. He said, "The best kind of wrongdoers are those who repent frequently."

Al-Qushayri said, "One of the finer meanings of the Ascent is that the first state that came over him during that night was that of cleanliness and purity, as we mentioned before. The breast of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was split twice (a third time is related by Imam Ahmad, when the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was ten): the first time when he was a young boy under the care of his foster mother, Halima, and the second time on the night of the Ascent.

There are significances in the fact that the only part of his body that was washed was his heart. Firstly, it indicates that the heart is the place of knowledge of Allah. The heart is a piece of flesh, and if that piece of flesh is healthy then the whole body is healthy. It is also the place of witnessing, the centre of feelings and the source of rays of light. It also indicates that there was no place in his heart for anything but the Truth. Finally, it indicates to the Islamic community the importance of the heart being pure.

Just as the splitting of the breast that occurred at the beginning of the Night Journey represents repentance, it also acts as a clear instruction for us to take refuge in Allah and turn to Him before engaging in any matter of importance, such as buying, selling, marrying, building a house or starting out on a journey. When we turn to Allah in matters such as this, we are not making repentance for sin, but are taking refuge in Him and seeking His Intercession. By purifying our hearts, we hope that Allah will make our steps firm, give us success, protect us from doing wrong, and prevent things from going wrong. Seeking intercession with Allah by doing good action is repentance .

The End of the Path of Life

It is possible that someone might rush to ask where the Path of Life ultimately leads to. He might say, "If the beginning of the Islamic journey is with repentance, then what is its end?" We answer that question without doubt or hesitation: "There is no destination except Allah." Allah is the final destination for the true believer. Allah makes this exceedingly clear, leaving no room for doubt. He says: "*That the ultimate end is with your Lord.*" (53:41)

Abu Sa'id al-Kharraz, may Allah be pleased with him, said, expressing the feelings a believer has towards Allah, "Everything that passes you by from Allah other than Allah is insignificant, and every portion that you obtain other than Allah is of no matter."

The *hijra* of the believer is to Allah, Mighty and Exalted. He has said: "*I am leaving this place to follow the pleasure of my Lord.*" (29:25) He has also said: "*I am going towards my Lord; He will be my guide.*" (37:99) The flight of a believer is also to Allah: He orders us to flee to Him. Allah says: "*So flee to Allah.*" (51:50)

The end of the journey that we are discussing – the Ascent and the Night Journey – was Allah, glory be to Him. This journey was a realisation of the Qur'anic verse "*The ultimate end is with your Lord*" (53:41), for there was nothing else left at the end of it apart from Him.

The further one travels along this path and the closer one gets to its end, the greater Allah's concern for him and protection of him. However, a person starts to be under Allah's care and protec-

tion from the first step he takes along the Path. This step is represented by asking Allah's forgiveness. Allah commands us to ask Him for forgiveness and points out to us its effects – effects that are neither slight nor trifling. He says, glory be to Him: *"Ask for forgiveness of your Lord; truly He is Endlessly Forgiving. He will send heaven down on you in abundant rain and reinforce you with more wealth and sons, and grant you gardens and grant you waterways."* (71:10-12) And He also says: *"Ask forgiveness of your Lord and then repent to Him. He will send heaven down to you in abundant rain, and increase you with strength upon strength."* (11:52)

The more time a person spends travelling on the Path to Allah repenting and asking forgiveness of Him, the greater Allah's care and concern for him. If he comes to the end and reaches Him, Allah's care and concern will be enough to take care of him in this world and the Hereafter. Allah says: *"Indeed, the friends of Allah will feel no fear and will know no sorrow: those who believe and are god-fearing, there is good news for them in the life of this world and in the Next World. There is no changing the words of Allah. That is the great victory."* (10:62-64)

Arriving at the destination (Allah) not only gives one spiritual tranquillity, but also removes one's feelings of unease and psychological disorder; removes his worries about provision and fear of death; and removes all doubts and thoughts that could turn one from Allah, which come to one in the depths of his psyche.

Arrival has another meaning. It indicates continuous spiritual advancement and being in constant contact with the Divine, thus, in every instant, receiving direct knowledge of Allah. May the peace and blessings of Allah be on everyone who arrives at this destination. Despite this high level of spirituality, this arriver is commanded to say: *"Lord, increase me in knowledge"* (20:111), meaning, 'increase me in bounty from You'.

According to the definition of 'the friends of Allah', what is meant by an increase in knowledge is an increase in bounty by a person being granted happiness and good fortune. This prompted one of the gnostics to say, "We are in a state of happiness which, if kings knew about it, they would raise their swords against us in order to obtain it."

The type of happiness experienced by the gnostic varies according to the sort of knowledge he has obtained. Every category of knowledge has its own unique flavour. Indeed, we could say that every type of knowledge has a specific pleasure attached to it, if the word 'pleasure' can be used thus. This man submits to what is before him, and what is before him also has its own special taste and enjoyment. This state of happiness is the Paradise of this world. That does not mean that the Friends of Allah are prevented from acquiring wealth, however, for the fact that they have much wealth does not turn them from Allah. This is exemplified by Sulayman, peace be upon him, whose great kingdom on this earth did not distract him from Allah. The secret of this is that they attach no importance to wealth and riches. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: "I was asked to choose between being a king and Messenger or being a slave and Messenger. I chose to be a slave and Messenger."

Abu Sa'id al-Kharraz expanded on what this *badith* meant for the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, when he related that Jibril came to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and told him: "Here are the keys to the treasure houses of the earth, which will remain full of gold and silver until the Day of Rising. Taking them will not lessen your standing with Allah in any way." The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, however, did not take them, but said, "I want sometimes to go hungry, and sometimes to be full."

The Friends of Allah are also not prevented from experiencing sensual pleasure, but they are in every moment in the grip of a pleasure more precious and exalted. Indeed, they are not prevented from experiencing any of the pleasures of this world. In the meantime, however, their hearts rejoice in their closeness to their Lord and are tranquil on account of the security that they feel.

Stages on the Journey

1. *Jihad*

How does one arrive at this destination? How does one come to be constantly encompassed by the pleasure of Allah and the

lights of gnosis? How does one reach a state of constant happiness and obtain the protection, care and love and Allah which reaching Him guarantees?

The answer to these questions may be found in the account of that blessed Journey that began with the splitting of the breast of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, or repentance, and whose end is described by Allah's Words, "*Then he drew near and hung suspended. He was two bow-lengths away.*" (53:8-9)

As soon as the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, began this blessed Journey, he saw something remarkable. He saw some people sowing their land and harvesting their crops in a single day. As soon as they had harvested it, the soil returned to the state in which it had been before sowing. Thereupon the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asked Jibril, peace be upon him, "What is this?" He replied, "These are the people who made *jihad* in the Way of Allah. Their good actions are multiplied seven hundred times. He repays them for everything they spent, and He is the Best of Providers."

This vision takes us directly from repentance to *jihad* and this is a most natural progression for, if repentance is truly sincere, then it must be followed by *jihad*. *Jihad* has a very important position within the *Deen* of Islam. Abu Dharr related that he himself asked, "Messenger of Allah, what is the best action a man can perform?" He answered, "To believe in Allah and to make *jihad* in His Way." (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

The meaning of '*jihad* in the Way of Allah' is wider than might be thought. It is not limited to fighting and war, but also includes *jihad* of the self: to fight the self to make it go straight and make repentance possible, and fight the self to make it willing to establish the obligatory and the supererogatory. This *jihad* must be constant without let-up until the self has been completely purified after repentance. Allah says: "*he who purifies it has succeeded*" (91:9) and "*Whoever is purified is purified for himself alone.*" (35:18)

Another type of *jihad* is *jihad* of the family. A man must continue to struggle until his family has gone straight and has become obedient to the commands of Allah. Allah, glory be to Him, says: "*You who believe, safeguard yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones. Harsh, terrible angels are in charge of it,*

who do not disobey Allah in respect of any order He gives them and who carry out what they are ordered to do." (66:6) Isma'il, peace be upon him, used to order his family to perform the prayer and pay *zakat*, and his Lord was content with him.

Another type of *jihad* is the *jihad* of society as a whole. Just because a person is struggling to make his self and his family right, that does not mean that he is exempt from the struggle to create a better society.

All of these types of *jihad* are perfectly in harmony with each other as they all fall under the umbrella of commanding the right and forbidding the wrong; and that is the basic principle of Islam.

Allah mentions this principle before faith in order to stress its immense importance and show that it is the station of the best of the Islamic Community. He says: "*You are the best nation ever to be produced before mankind. You enjoin the right, forbid the wrong and believ in Allah.*" (3:110)

The Jews were an example of the complete opposite of that. Allah says: "*Those among the Tribe of Israel who disbelieved were cursed on the tongue of Dawud and that of 'Isa, son of Maryam. That is because they rebelled and overstepped the limits. They would not restrain one another from any of the wrong things that they did. How evil were the things they used to do!*" (5:78-79)

Islam shows us the different means of making *jihad*; These means vary depending upon one's circumstances and the possibilities open to him. Ibn Mas'ud, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: "Every one of the Prophets who was sent to a nation of people before me had disciples and companions who adopted his *Sunna* and obeyed his commands. Then they were succeeded by evil generations who said what they did not do and did what they were not commanded to do. He who makes *jihad* against them with his hand is a believer; he who makes *jihad* against them with his tongue is a believer; and he who makes *jihad* against them with his heart is a believer. He who does none of these things does not have a speck of faith." (Muslim)

Abu Sa'id al-Khudri, may Allah be pleased with him, said that he heard the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, say: "Any of you who sees something that is wrong

should change it with his hand. If he cannot do so with his hand, then he should change it with his tongue. If he cannot do so with his tongue, then he should change it with his heart – and that is the weakest type of faith.”

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, illustrated for us the way a society should be and the necessity of taking to task and stopping anyone who tries to corrupt it. An-Nu‘man ibn Bashir related that the Prophet said, “He who establishes Allah’s limits and he who disregards them are like a group a people who draw lots to see where they should be on a boat. Some of them get the upper deck and some the lower. When those in the lower deck want to get water, they have to pass by those above them, so they say to each other, ‘If we were to make a hole in our deck then we would not have to get water from those above us but could draw it straight from the lake’. If they left them to do what they wanted, all of them would have perished; but if they took hold of them and prevented them, they would save them, and they would all be safe.” (al-Bukhari)

Hudhayfa, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “By Him who has my soul in His Hand, you are commanded to enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong. If you do not do so then know that Allah is on the point of sending a punishment down upon you and then, when you supplicate to Him to save you from the punishment, not answering you.” (At-Tirmidhi)

Abu Sa‘id al-Khudri related that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “The best type of *jihad* is when a righteous man speaks out in the presence of a tyrannical sultan.”

Allah, glory be to Him, will never leave this earth without at least a few people enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong. According to both *Sahih* Collections, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “There will continue to be a party of my Community who support the truth until Allah’s Command arrives (the Last Day): they will not be harmed by those who abandon them or by those who oppose them.”

As for the type of *jihad* that means war, it is enough for us to mention a few *hadiths* and a few verses from the Qur’an to show

that it is a natural part of Islam. Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said, "Whoever dies without doing battle in the Way of Allah, or feeling in his heart the desire to do battle in the Way of Allah, has died with a branch of hypocrisy in his heart."

Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "One of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, passed by a ravine in which there was a spring of sweet, fresh water. It pleased him very much and he said to himself, 'Perhaps I should cut myself off from people and live in this ravine. I will not do it, however, until I ask permission from the Messenger of Allah.' He spoke to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, who told him, 'Do not do it! It is better that one of you stand up and fight in the Way of Allah than for him to stand in prayer in his house for seventy years. Do you not want Allah to forgive you and admit you to Paradise? Then do battle in the Way of Allah. Paradise is guaranteed for him who fights and dies in the Way of Allah.'" (at-Tirmidhi)

Abu Umama, may Allah be pleased with him, related that a man said, "Messenger of Allah, give me permission to travel the world." The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, answered, "The travelling of my Community is *jihad* in the Way of Allah." (Abu Dawud)

The Qur'an makes a connection between *jihad* and faith and states that it is not possible for a person to have sincere faith unless he is willing to make *jihad* to protect its components. Indeed, in the covenant of faith Allah buys from the believers, their wealth and lives. He says: "*Allah has bought from the believers their selves and their wealth in return for the Garden. They fight in the Way of Allah and they kill and are killed. It is a promise binding on Him in the Torah, the Gospel and the Qur'an; and who is truer to his contract than Allah? Rejoice, then, in the bargain you have made. That is the great victory.*" (9:112)

Jihad is also a trade with Allah: "You who believe, shall I direct you to a transaction which will save you from a painful punishment? It is to believe in Allah and His Messenger and do *jihad* in the Way of Allah with your wealth and your selves. That is better for you if you only knew. He will forgive you your wrong actions and admit you into Gardens with

rivers flowing under them, and fine dwellings in the Gardens of Eden. That is the Great Victory." (61:10-12)

Jihad is also something which indicates the sincerity of a person's faith: "*The believers are only those who believe in Allah and His Messenger and then have had no doubt and have done jihad with their wealth and themselves in the Way of Allah. They are the ones who are true to their word.*" (49:15) In its widest sense, *jihad* is the first step along the Path after repentance. After purification comes the meeting with Allah, Exalted is He.

The Lives of the Prophets and Martyrs after death

In the order in which things occurred on the Blessed Journey [i.e. the Night Journey], prayer comes straight after *jihad*, but because of the close connection between the subject in this section – the lives of the Prophets after death – and the section before it, we have mentioned it here. We will go back to the normal order of the Blessed Journey after this.

Anas ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "I came to (Hadab relates it as 'I passed by') Musa, peace be upon him, during my Night Journey at the Red Sand Dunes (*al-Kathib al-Ahmar*) while he was standing in his tomb praying." (Muslim)

According to a *hadith* from 'Abdi'l-'Aziz, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: "I saw myself in a group of Prophets and there was Musa standing in prayer. He was a strongly built man with very little fat, as if he were a man of the tribe of Shanu'a. And there was 'Isa son of Maryam standing in prayer. The man who resembles him the most is 'Urwa ibn Mas'ud ath-Thaqafi. And there was Ibrahim standing in prayer. The man who resembles him the most is your companion (referring to himself). The time of the prayer arrived and I led them in prayer." (Muslim) The Prophets are alive in their tombs.

Aws ibn Aws related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "The best day is the day of Friday, for it was on that day that Adam was created, and it was on

that day that he went to his grave; and on that day will be the blast on the Trumpet and people will be dumbfounded, so invoke many blessings upon me, for your prayers are relayed to me." They asked, "How will our prayers be relayed to you after you have turned to dust?" He replied, "Allah has made it unlawful for the earth to devour the bodies of the Prophets, peace be upon them." (Ahmad, al-Hakim and an-Nawawi)

Al-Bayhaqi stated about this *hadith*: "Abu Dawud and as-Sijistani transmitted it in *Kitab as-Sunan* and they have their proofs about its soundness." Then he related some of their proofs. The first he related was the *hadith* of Abu Mas'ud al-Ansari, who said that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had said, "Invoke many blessings upon me on Friday, for every person who prays upon me on Friday has his prayers relayed to me."

Al-Bayhaqi related another of these proofs on the authority of Abu Umama that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Invoke many blessings upon me on Friday, for the prayers of my Community are relayed to me every Friday. He who invokes the most blessings upon me is nearest to me in rank." This is true regardless of how close or how far the person praying on the Prophet is from his noble tomb: his prayer will always reach him. Al-Bayhaqi transmitted from Abu Hurayra in *Shu'ab al-iman* and al-Isbahani in *at-Targhib* that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "If a person prays upon me next to my tomb, I can hear him; and if he prays upon me from elsewhere, his prayer is relayed to me."

In this vein, there is also the *hadith* related by 'Ammar that he heard the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, say, "Allah, Exalted is He, has appointed an angel to stand by my graveside, who has been given the ability to hear all of creation. There is no one who prays about me without his prayer being conveyed to me." (al-Bukhari)

Al-Qushayri proved, in many different ways, that the Prophets are alive in their tombs, and he transmitted *hadiths* to back this up. 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: "Allah has angels who travel throughout the world. They relay the

greetings of my Community to me.” Al-Qushayri says, in his commentary on this *hadith*, “Greetings could not be conveyed to him unless he were alive.”

Abu'd-Darda', may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said, “Invoke many blessings for me on Friday, for they are witnessed: the angels see them. As soon as one of you starts praying for me, his prayer continues to be relayed to me until he finishes.” Abu'd-Darda' said, “I asked the Messenger, ‘And after your death?’ He replied, ‘Allah has made it unlawful for the earth to devour the bodies of the Prophets, peace and blessings be upon them.’”

The Prophets are alive in their graves and this fact was attested to by the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, when he saw Musa, peace be upon him, and when he saw the other Prophets, spoke with them and prayed with them.

As for the prayer which they prayed, it was not an obligatory one but was a prayer of thanks and praise to Allah for the blessings He had showered upon them. There are no obligatory actions in the Hereafter, even if spiritual advancement does not necessarily come to a halt and may continue *ad infinitum*, as divine aid never comes to an end; and whenever a soul receives any level of this divine aid he is overcome by feelings of praise and gratitude to Allah. Allah, glory be to Him, says: “*Their call there is: ‘Glory be to You, O Allah!’ Their greeting there is: ‘Peace!’ The end of their call is: ‘Praise be to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds!’*” (10:10)

A person might ask himself about what form this life after death takes. And whether it is specific to the Prophets or not. Our answer is that the Qur'an proves beyond doubt that this life is also for martyrs. Allah says: “*Do not suppose that those killed in the Way of Allah are dead. No indeed! They are alive and well provided for in the very presence of their Lord, delighting in the favour Allah has bestowed on them, rejoicing over those they left behind who have not yet joined them, feeling no fear and knowing no sorrow.*” (3:169-170)

The occasion on which these verses were revealed is transmitted in many of the *Sunan* Collections. It is related that, when the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, saw Jabir ibn 'Abdullah in a state of grief after his father had been martyred in the Battle of Uhud he said to him, in order to bring him

tranquillity and give him good news, "Should I not tell you about what Allah said to your father?" Jabir said: "Yes, indeed." The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said, "Allah has never before spoken to anyone except from behind a veil. He spoke to your father directly (i.e. without a veil) and told him, 'Ask Me and I will grant it to you'. He said, 'I ask You to return me to the world so I may fight for Your sake another time'. Thereupon, Allah said, 'I have already given My Word that they may not return to it'. He said, 'Then my Lord, tell those whom I have left behind about me [in other words, 'Tell those that I have left behind about the great blessing that every martyr receives in the Garden.']) Thereupon Allah revealed the verses mentioned above." (3:169-170)

Allah also says: "*Do not say that those who are killed in the Way of Allah are dead. On the contrary, they are alive - but you are not aware of it.*" (2:153) Al-Qushayri said, "Allah informs us that martyrs are alive in the presence of their Lord. The Prophets are more entitled than them to that, because the rank of the masses is below that of those who have attained prophethood. Allah, glory be to Him, says: '*Whoever obeys Allah and the Messenger will be with those whom Allah has blessed: the Prophets and the true, the martyrs and the righteous. What excellent company such people are!*'" (4:68) This verse proves that the rank of martyrdom is the third rank, after prophethood and recognizing the truth. There are also many *hadiths* in this vein.

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya observed, concerning the occasion on which this noble verse about martyrs was revealed, "Allah consoles His Prophet and His friends over the death of those among them who had been killed in His Way in the best and subtlest way. He consoles them in a way that brought them contentment about what Allah had decreed for them, when He said, '*Do not suppose that those killed...*' In their eternal life they have been blessed by being given the station of nearness, a place in His presence and a constant flow of provision. Their joy in the bounty that they have received from Him, in their brothers who are gathered together with them and in the fact that Allah's blessings are renewed for them in every instant, is greater than contentment: rather, it is the perfection of contentment."

Mahmud ibn Labid related from 'Abbas in a *marfu'* *hadith*: "The martyrs are on the bank of a river at the Gates of Paradise within a green dome. Their provision is brought from the Garden for them in the morning and evening." (Ahmad and At-Tabarani)

Al-Qurtubi says in *Hayat al-Anbiya' wa'sh-Shuhada*, "Death is not absolute lack of existence, but is rather a transition from one state to another." This is proved by the fact that martyrs, after being killed, are described as being in a state of happiness and joy – and these states characterise the living.

If that is the state of the martyrs, how much more must this be the case with the Prophets! We have already related the statements of the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, that the earth does not devour the bodies of the Prophets; that he met with the Prophets in Jerusalem and in the heavens during the Night Journey; that he saw Musa, peace be upon him, standing in prayer in his grave; and that he returns the greeting of all who send him their greetings. These, and other similar statements, prove beyond doubt that what is meant by the death of the Prophets is that they are alive but have moved to a place where we cannot perceive them. They are in the Unseen like the angels, who are present everywhere but cannot be seen by most of us. The only ones who can see them are those friends of Allah whom He has blessed and given that ability to.

The scholars of jurisprudence have spoken at great lengths about martyrs and one of the issues they bring up in this regard is that of whether the questioning in the grave applies to martyrs. As-Suyuti delivered a *fatwa* that the questioning in the grave was not something that happened to the whole of mankind, but that martyrs were exempted from being subjected to it. His proof was that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was asked if martyrs were punished in their graves. He replied, "The spark of swords striking their heads is enough of a punishment."

Al-Qurtubi said in *at-Tadhkira*, quoting at-Tirmidhi, that if a person were to have had any amount of hypocrisy in his soul, he would flee from the battlefield when the fighting grew intense and swords clashed together, for that is what hypocrites do. As for a believer, he gives himself totally to Allah. When the trueness of his soul is revealed by his standing firm and fighting until he is

killed, there no longer remains any need for him to be questioned in the grave, for the purpose of the questioning is to distinguish a true believer from a hypocrite. Al-Qurtubi then said, "If a martyr is not punished in his grave, then a *siddiq* (a person who affirms the truth whenever he sees it) is even more entitled not to be punished, as his rank is higher."

Others who are exempted from being questioned in the grave are a *murabit* (one who defends the borders of Islam), anyone killed by plague, and anyone who remains steadfast in the plague-stricken land in expectation of the reward he will receive for that from Allah, even if he dies of something other than the plague. This was stated by Ibn Hajar in his book *Badhl al-ma'un*.

This life in the *barzakh* is not only for Prophets and martyrs but is for everyone, even the unbelievers. Both the Qur'an and the *Sunna* indicate this. Allah says about the family of Pharaoh: "*A most evil torment engulfed Pharaoh's people: the Fire, morning and night, to which they are exposed; and on the Day the Hour takes place: 'Admit Pharaoh's people to the harshest punishment!'*" (40:45-46) There is no doubt that the Fire mentioned in these verses is not the Fire of Resurrection Day, as there is no morning or night or rising and setting of the sun on that Day. There is also the fact that the word 'and' indicates a change from one thing to another. What the verse says is that the people of Pharaoh are exposed to the Fire in the morning and in the evening, whereby they see their place in it and see what will eventually happen to them. Then, when the Day of Rising arrives, a caller calls out, saying "Admit Pharaoh's people to the harshest punishment", i.e. 'Admit them to it after they have been exposed to it night and day, to remain in it forever.'

The incident of the people of 'al-Qalib' (the 'pit', or 'well') is very well known. Al-Bukhari related many different narrations of this incident, as did others of the imams of *Hadith*. Here follows one of these narrations:

Anas ibn Malik related from Abu Talha that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, on the Day of Badr, ordered that twenty-four of the notables of the Quraysh who had been killed in the battle be thrown into one of the pits of Badr. The Prophet, peace be upon him, after attaining victory

over a people, would spend three nights in his courtyard. On the third day after Badr, he asked for his camel, saddled it and went off, followed by his companions. They said, "We did not think he was going anywhere except to do something he needed to do. When he came to the pit into which the dead unbelievers had been thrown, he stood at its edge and called out to each of them, addressing them by name and by the names of their fathers, and saying, "O so-and-so, son of so-and-so, we have found what Allah has promised us to be true. Have you found what your Lord promised you to be true?" Thereupon, 'Umar said, "Messenger of Allah, how can you speak to soulless dead bodies?" The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, replied, "By Him Who holds Muhammad in His Hand, you do not hear me any better than they do." (al-Bukhari)

The large number of *hadiths* related about this incident, along with those that deal with the punishment in the grave, and those relating that the grave is either one of the meadows of the Garden or one of the pits of the Fire, serve to prove that every time a human being dies and departs from this world he is transported to another state of existence. For even if his body might decay his soul will remain; and it is his soul that feels and thinks.

As for what happens to believers after death, it is useful to relate the following story.

'Abdu'r-Rahman ibn Ka'b ibn Malik said: "When Ka'b was on the point of death, Umm Bishr bint al-Bara' came to him and said, 'Abu 'Abdi'r-Rahman, if you see Bishr, give him my greetings.' He told her, 'May Allah forgive you, Umm Bishr. We are going to be too busy to do that.' She said, 'Did you not hear the Messenger of Allah say, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, "The soul of a believer is free to go wherever it wants in the Garden, whereas the soul of the unbeliever is in *Sijjin*"?' He replied, 'Yes, I heard him say that.' She said, 'There is your answer, then'." (al-Bayhaqi)

Ibn 'Abbās related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "If anyone passes by the grave of a fellow believer with whom he was acquainted in this world and greets him, he will recognize him and return the greeting." (Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *al-Istidhkar* and *at-Tamhid*).

Now that we are on this topic, perhaps some people are wondering what form this life after death, enjoyed by the Prophets, martyrs and others, takes. In order to answer this question, we will quote what Ibn Qayyim had to say on the matter in his precious book *ar-Rub* ('*The Soul*').

"Allah, glory be to Him, has created three abodes: the abode of this world, the abode of the *barzakh* and the abode of permanence (the Hereafter). Then he put in place rules to govern each of these abodes: these rules were specific to each. Then he assembled man of two parts: his body and soul. The rules of this world are concerned with the body, and the soul is subservient to it. Its rules and judgements are legal in nature and reflect on the movements that a person's tongue or limbs make, even if that person hides his true feelings and intentions.

"In the *barzakh*, the rules and judgements apply to the soul, and the body is subservient to it. So, in the same way that the soul must follow what the body does and experience pain when the body is hurt or pleasure when the body is at rest, the body must do the same in the *barzakh*. Punishment or blessing happen directly to the soul and the body then experiences what the soul has experienced. Here, in this world, bodies are manifest and souls hidden; it is as if the bodies are prisons for the souls. There, in the *barzakh*, souls are manifest and bodies are hidden in their graves (which are prisons for them). The judgements or rules of the *barzakh* apply to the souls and, according to how they are judged, bring blessing or torment upon their bodies, whereas the judgements or rules of the this world apply to the bodies and, according to how they are judged, bring blessing or torment upon their souls. Know this subject well and always bear it in mind. If you do so, every problem that happens to you, whether it comes to you from within or without, will disappear."

Through His kindness, mercy and guidance, Allah, glory be to Him, has given us examples of this in this world. For example, while a person is asleep things can happen to him in his dreams. These things happen to a person's soul firstly, and traces of that may manifest themselves in a physical sense on his body. So a person might see himself being hit in his dream and then wake up to find the mark of that blow on his body, or see himself eat or drink

in his dream and then wake up to find the taste of food or drink in his mouth and find the pangs of his hunger gone.

Even more extraordinary than this is the fact that some people, totally unaware of what they are doing, walk in their sleep, strike out in their sleep and even defend themselves in their sleep, just as if they were awake. The reason is that it is the soul governing the body and it controls the body from without. If it were to enter the body, the control would return to the body and it would wake up and feel what it is doing. The relationship of the soul to the body in the *barzakh* is just as it is when one is asleep, but even more so, for the soul there has completely slipped the bonds of the body while continuing to be strongly connected to it, but from outside. So when a soul is punished there the effects on the body are even more pronounced.

Then, on the Day when bodies are gathered together and people are resurrected from their graves, the Decree, blessing or punishment are applied to the souls and bodies in a clear and manifest way. If you give this fact the attention it deserves, it will become very clear to you that the statements of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, concerning the punishment in the grave, the constriction or expanse that a person finds therein, and whether the grave is one of the meadows of the Garden or one of the pits of the Fire, are extremely rational. These descriptions are factual and there is no doubt of that. If one finds difficulty in accepting these things, that is due to the pooriness of his understanding and paucity of his knowledge, and nothing else.

To conclude this section, we would like to mention something from al-Ghazali, speaking from personal experience. These words express the point of view of all Sufis and eastern philosophers. He said: "In the beginning of the Path, openings and witnessings begin to appear. It continues thus as the Sufi goes along the Path until he sees the angels and the souls of the Prophets while in a waking state, hears their voices and is able to benefit from them. His state then rises above seeing outward forms to a level that no words could possibly express."

2. The Prayer

Let us go back to the account of the Night Journey. What comes after *jihad*?

"Then the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, came upon a group of people whose heads were being split open with stones. Every time their heads were split open, they returned to the state that had been before and then they were stoned again. This went on without let-up. Thereupon, the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asked, 'What is this, Jibril?' He replied, 'These are the people whose heads were too sluggish to perform the obligatory prayers.'"

The stage of religious obligatory actions has come, and the first of these obligatory actions is the prayer. The prayer is the Second Pillar of Islam: the rank that it holds is immediately after that of belief in Allah and His Messenger. The Blessed Journey represents the past, present and future and represents the way Islamic life should be, showing each of its temporal stages whether they be based on creed or on good character.

In Islam, the prayer is defined as being the 'central pillar' of the *Deen*: whoever establishes the prayer has established the *Deen*, and whoever spoils the prayer spoils the *Deen*. The simile of the prayer in the life of a Muslim, as defined by the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is that of a deep river that flows past a person's door and in which he washes himself five times a day.

'Abdullah ibn Qurat, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: "The first thing for which the slave is called to account on the Day of Rising is the prayer. If his prayer is in order, then his other actions will also be in order; but if his prayer is unsound then the rest of his actions will also be unsound." (at-Tabarani)

Ibn 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "He who has no loyalty and faithfulness has no faith; he who has no cleanliness and purity has no prayer; and he who has no prayer has no *Deen*."

The relationship of the prayer to the *Deen* is like the relationship of the head to the body. On one occasion, during his sleep, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had a vision in which he saw a person who abandons the prayer being represented in a way that resembled the description given at the beginning of this section. He said, "I went out and passed by an angel standing over a man. The angel had a stone in his hand, with which he would strike down on the skull of the man in front of him. As he struck him, the man's brains would fall down on one side and the stone would fall on the other." When the Prophet, peace be upon him, asked about what that meant, he was told that these people were those who slept through the time of the '*Isba*' prayer, without praying it in its time, and did not pray prayers within their times. They are to be punished in that way – heads crushed with a stone – until they are admitted to the Fire.

Al-Qushayri said: "I heard Abu 'Ali ad-Daqqaq, may Allah be pleased with him, say, 'Our Prophet, peace be upon him, in reality brought the Ascent to his Community, for the prayer is the Ascent brought down. The Ascent and Night Journey of the Messenger of Allah had three distinct stages: from the Haram to al-Aqsa Mosque; from al-Aqsa Mosque to the Lote Tree of the Furthest Limit; and from the Lote Tree of the Furthest Limit to two bow-lengths away, or closer.'"

In the same way, the prayer has three stages: standing, bowing and finally prostration. Allah says: "*But prostrate and draw near.*" (96:20)

3. Zakat

Zakat comes straight after prayer in the journey of life that is under discussion in this chapter. In the Night Journey, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, came upon some people with only rags covering their private parts. They were wandering around and grazing in the way that cattle do, eating *dari'* (a bitter thorny bush), and *zaqqum* (a tree with very bitter fruit). He asked, "Who are these people?" Jibril, peace be upon him, replied, "These are the people who did not pay *zakat* on their wealth. Allah has not wronged them. Your Lord does not act unjustly to His slaves."

Zakat is the Third Pillar of Islam, and Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, made war in order to uphold it. After the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had moved on and left this plane of existence, some of the desert Arab tribes said: "We will continue to affirm that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, to establish the prayer, fast the month of Ramadan and perform the *Hajj*. As for *zakat*, however, we consider it to be a material concern that has no connection with the *Deen*." They then announced that they would not pay it. In the history of Islam, this was the first deviant position adopted by any group of Muslims: they wanted to dis sever the *Deen* from any connection with material matters. In other words, they wanted to separate state and religion. Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "I will make war upon you. Anyone who wants to separate *deen* from the state will be fought."

Some people asked him, "How can you wage war on someone who testifies that there is no god but Allah, and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah?" He replied that there were also conditions attached to the two *shahadas*: if a person refuses to fulfil these conditions, he should be fought until he does so. Paying *zakat* is one of those conditions."

Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "After the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had passed away and Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, had become Caliph, some of the Arabs became unbelievers (by not paying *zakat*, refusing to do so and not considering it an obligation on them). 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, asked Abu Bakr, 'How can you fight these people when the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "I have been commanded to fight people until they say "There is no god but Allah." If a person says that then his wealth and life is safe from me except by right, and his reckoning is with Allah.'" He replied, 'By Allah, I will fight anyone who splits the prayer apart from *zakat*. *Zakat* is the right on wealth. By Allah, if they deny me so much as a young she-goat which they used to give to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, I will fight them until they hand it over.' 'Umar said, "By Allah, it was as if Allah had opened up the breast of Abu Bakr to making war and had

given him understanding of the matter. Thereupon I knew that what he was saying was the truth.”(al-Bukhari)

We know from this *hadith* that anyone who refuses to pay *zakat* in this way, saying that it is not obligatory for him to do so, is an unbeliever, and should be fought until he either pays it or is killed. Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, fought those who refused to pay *zakat* because he saw the refusal to pay *zakat*, or consider it to be obligatory, to be apostasy from Islam. In the view of Abu Bakr and the rest of the Companions, who had become convinced by his arguments, the fact that they established the prayer or fasted or fulfilled all the other rites of Islam availed them naught when they refused to pay the *zakat*.

This is because *zakat* is one of the Pillars of the *Deen*, and refusing to pay it is akin to destroying one of the things upon which Islam is built. It is the Third Pillar and anyone upon whom it is obligatory must pay it to those who are deserving of it. By it people are kept alive, stomachs are filled, tears are wiped away, pain is removed and a great reward from Allah is obtained.

There is no doubt that *zakat* binds a person to his Lord: it connects him to the pleasure of Allah and to His reward and blessing. It binds a person to Allah by his having gratitude for all the blessings that He has bestowed upon him. It also, from a different point of view, binds one to other individuals within the community in which one lives: it connects him with them by creating feelings of love, compassion and affection between them.

Allah warns those who refuse to pay *zakat* and threatens them with a painful punishment. As for those who do pay it, Allah, glory be to Him, mentions them amongst those with whom He is pleased and those whom He will reward. He says: “*I have warned you of a Fire that rages, in which only the most wretched will roast: those who denied and turned away. Those who are most godfearing will be far-removed from it: those who give their wealth to purify themselves, not to repay someone else for a favour done, desiring only the Face of their Lord Most High. They will certainly be satisfied.*” (92:14-21) Allah also says: “*Those who are tight-fisted with the bounty Allah has given them should not suppose that that is better for them. No indeed, it is worse for them! What they were tight-fisted with will be hung around their necks*

on the Day of Rising. Allah is the inheritor of the heavens and the earth; and Allah is aware of what you do.” (3:180)

4. Sadaqa (Charity)

Having just talked about *zakat*, it makes sense to make mention of *sadaqa*, regardless of whether we mean by that term ‘*zakat*’ or voluntary alms (charity). Allah, glory be to Him, says: “*The likeness of those who spend their wealth in the Way of Allah is that of a grain which produces seven ears; in every ear there are a hundred grains. Allah gives such multiplied increase to whomever He wills. Allah is All-Encompassing, All-Knowing.*” (2:260) And He, glory be to Him, says: “*As for him who gives, is godfearing and confirms the Good, We will pave his way to ease. But as for him who is stingy and self-satisfied, and denies the Good, We will pave his way to difficulty. His wealth will not help him when he plummets to the depths.*” (92:5-11) And He says: “*But anything you expend will be replaced by Him. He is the Best of Providers.*” (34:39)

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, saw how those who refused to pay *zakat* were dealt with and the form that they took. Amongst the people that he saw, he also saw the way in which those who devoured usury were treated. We would now like to mention usury, as it is the absolute opposite of *sadaqa*. The difference between them is like the difference between good and evil, for *zakat* and *sadaqa* are charity and giving, while *riba* (usury) is the taking and dispossessing of wealth.

5. Riba (Usury)

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, saw a river of blood, boiling like water bubbling in a cauldron. On both sides of the river were angels with fireballs in their hands. Every time some one rose up out of the blood, they threw the fireballs at him. The fire went into his mouth and he burst into flames and continued to burn until he reached the bottom of that river. When the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asked about them, he was told that they were the

people who devoured usury and so are being punished for it until they are admitted into the Fire.

During the Night Journey, the Messenger of Allah passed by a people whose bellies were the size of houses. Each time any of them tried to stand up he fell flat on the ground. When he asked Jibril about them, he told him that they were those who devoured usury. To alert people to the ugly nature of usury, Allah declares war on those who deal in it. Allah has declared war on two types of people: firstly those who devour usury, and secondly those who make the friends of Allah their enemies.

He declares war on the usurers in the Noble Qur'an when He says: "*Know that it means war from Allah and His Messenger*" (2:278), and declares war on those who are hostile to His friends in a *hadith qudsi* related by al-Bukhari when He says, "Whoever takes one of My friends as an enemy, I declare war on him."

The usurer is personified in the Night Journey as being a man swimming in a sea of blood and having fire thrown into his mouth, which he swallows. The explanation of this is that "He is swimming in the blood which he squeezed from the veins of those with whom he dealt during his life, and the money which he took from them has burst into flame and goes inside him, burning him and setting him alight."

There is no doubt that at the opposite end of the spectrum to *sadaqa* and *zakat* is usury, and it is that which Allah hates: that, and those who deal in it. Islam fights usury uncompromisingly and uses the strongest language in condemning it, as it is an absolutely inhumane institution. Islam fights usury regardless of the form it takes. Allah says: "*Those who practise usury will not rise from the grave except as someone driven mad by Shaytan's touch.*" (2:274) Those who practise usury are "*the Companions of the Fire, remaining in it timelessly, forever.*" (2:274)

Allah, Exalted is He, then says: "*Allah obliterates usury but makes sadaqa grow in value! Allah does not love any persistently ungrateful wrongdoer.*" (2:275) But Allah leaves the gate of repentance open to those who practise usury. He says: "*You who believe, fear Allah and forgo any remaining usury if you are believers. If you do not, know that it means war from Allah and His Messenger. But if you repent you may*

have your capital, without wronging and without being wronged." (2:277-278)

One matter on which there is absolutely no doubt about is that usury in any form is something that goes against the spirit of the *Deen* and the principles which govern it: principles such as compassion and cooperation. The following verse is a good way of concluding our discussion on *sadaqa*, *zakat* and usury, and the differences between them. Allah says: "*Spend in the Way of Allah. Do not cast yourselves into destruction. And do good: Allah loves good-doers.*" (2:194) In this noble verse, Allah, glory be to Him, indicates that being miserly and tight-fisted and not spending of one's wealth in the Way of Allah is in fact equivalent to casting one's self into destruction.

Allah also says: "*Believe in Allah and His Messenger and give of that in which He has made you agents. Those of you who believe and give will have an immense reward.*" (57:7) In this noble verse, Allah lets us know that it is He Who has made wealthy men His viziers by letting them use His wealth: Allah's wealth is His, and they are merely agents acting on His behalf. This indicates that if they misuse their wealth, He will take away their rights as agents and it will be as if they had no money.

Allah, glory be to Him, also says: "*Who will make a good loan to Allah so that He may multiply it for him and he may have a generous reward.*" (57:11) Allah, glory be to Him, multiplies this person's wealth (i.e. that of him who spends his wealth in the Way of Allah) in this world and then rewards him for it in the Next. He says: "*On the Day you see the men and women of the believers, with their light streaming out in front of them, and to their right: 'Good news for you today of Gardens with rivers flowing under them, remaining in them timelessly, forever. That is the Great Victory.'*" (57:12)

6. Firmness of Belief ('*aqida*)

This Blessed Journey has taken us directly from repentance to *jihad*, and then to prayer and *zakat*; these two obligations represent all obligatory acts.

The Journey then mentions various types of sin, which are representative of all sin, and then states that Allah takes people to

account for them and for other acts of disobedience to Him, unless one makes haste to repent sincerely for what he did.

Before we mention those sins, we would first like to talk about strength of belief and the firmness of the believers in holding to their '*aqida*, even if it means their own deaths. Thanks to their faith, those who are martyred exude a pure fragrance which continues until the Day of Rising. This pure smell emanates from the places in which they were killed and the places in which they stood; it clearly proves that the martyrs are in meadows in the Garden, surrounded by its fresh winds and in its merciful embrace.

During his Night Journey, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, smelled a sweet fragrance. He asked, "What is this, Jibril?" He replied, "It is the smell of the woman who combed the hair of the daughter of Pharaoh, and that of her children." This woman's story is as follows. While she was combing the hair of the daughter of Pharaoh, the comb fell from her hand. Thereupon she said, "In the Name of Allah, may Pharaoh perish." The daughter of Pharaoh asked, "Do you have a Lord other than my father?" "Yes," she replied. The daughter of Pharaoh asked, "Shall I tell my father about it?" "Yes," she answered, "Allah is my Lord and your Lord."

This woman had a husband and three children, the youngest of which was a suckling. The Pharaoh sent for them and tried to force the woman and her husband to renounce their *deen*. They refused, however, and so he told them that he would kill them both. She replied, "If you are going to kill us, then do us the favour of burying us all in the same place." He replied that he would do that for them. Then he called for a copper cauldron filled with boiling oil to be brought to him, and began to throw the members of the woman's family into it one by one until only the suckling baby remained in the arms of the mother. Because of her affection and compassion for her baby, she hesitated and almost renounced her *deen* to save him. However, her baby son told her, "Mother, throw yourself in and do not waver, for you are following the truth." This child was one of those miraculous ones who spoke in their cradles.

In Islamic history there are many famous positions taken up by the Companions and others: these were the views of people who were unconcerned about the way in which they were killed so long as they were fighting for the sake of Allah.

In the Battle of Badr, for example, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, consulted his Companions in advance about the *jihad*. Al-Miqdad ibn 'Amr, who was one of the Muhajirun, stood up and said, "Messenger of Allah, I will go where I see you go. We are with you. We will not say to you as the tribe of Israel said to Musa, peace be upon him, 'You and your Lord go and fight. We will remain sitting here,' but rather we will say, 'You and your Lord go and fight and we will be there fighting with you, by Him Who sent you with the truth. Even if you were to take us to Bark al-Ghimad [in Abyssinia], we would fight along with you until you got there.'"

Then Sa'd ibn Mu'adh, who was one of the Ansar, stood up and asked the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, if he was referring to the Ansar when he was asking the people for advice about what to do. When the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, replied that he was, Sa'd said, "We believe in you, affirm that what you have brought is the truth, and have made a covenant with you to hear and obey. So, Messenger of Allah, go where you want and we will go there with you. By Him Who sent you with the truth, if you were to ask us to cross this sea with you and then you plunged into it, we would dive in with you; not a single man would remain behind. We did not dislike it that you are taking us to confront the enemy tomorrow, for we are steadfast in war and reliable in the moment the two forces collide. Perhaps Allah will show you something about us that will make your heart glad, so go forth with the blessings of Allah."

7. Symbolic references specific to the tongue

There is an Arab saying, "A man is destroyed by that which is between his two jaws." It is also well known that one of the things that can cause a person to be thrown flat on his face in Hellfire is the produce of his tongue.

Allah, glory be to Him, in many verses in the Qur'an, warns against the sins of the tongue, as did His Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, on many different occasions. Allah, Exalted is He, says: *"You who believe, people should not ridicule others who may be better than themselves; nor should any women ridicule other women who may be better than themselves. Do not find fault with one another or insult each other with derogatory nicknames. How evil it is to have a name for evil conduct after coming to faith! Those people who do not turn from it are wrongdoers."* (49:11)

The Qur'an shows backbiters in a very ugly light in the verse that follows this, when He says: *"Do not backbite one another. Would any of you like to eat his brother's dead flesh? No, you would hate it. Fear Allah. Allah is Ever-Relenting, Most Merciful."* (49:12) Allah represents backbiting as eating a person's flesh, made this person a brother and made the brother dead. Then he finished off the image by saying "No, you would hate it."

Those who commit sins of the tongue are very well represented in the account of the Night Journey: there are many different examples of how they end up.

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, came upon a group of people whose tongues and lips were being cut off with scissors of iron. Every time they were cut off, they reverted to the way they had been before. This punishment did not abate, but kept on repeating again and again. He asked, "What is this, Jibril?" He replied, "These are the orators of civil unrest (*fitna*): the orators of your Community who say what they do not do."

He came upon a small rock from which an immense bull emerged. The bull tried to return from whence it came but was unable to do so. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asked, "What is this, Jibril?" He replied, "This is the likeness of a man who says a kind word then regrets saying it – he cannot take it back."

He saw a people with nails made of copper, scratching their faces and chests with them. He asked, "Who are these people, Jibril?" He replied, "These are the people who eat the flesh of others and attack their reputations."

And he saw a people with flesh being cut from their sides and then force-fed to them. He asked, "Who are these people, Jibril?" He replied, "This is the likeness of those who slander, backbite and find fault with others."

In one of his visions, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, saw an angel standing over a man and holding a pair of iron tongs in his hand. He would place the tongs in the right hand side of the man's mouth and rip open the right side of his face to his ear, then do the same with the left side. While he was splitting the left side, the right hand side would heal. When he asked Jibril about this, Jibril replied, "These are the ones who used to spread slander and false rumour amongst the Muslims in order to create division amongst them. They are punished in this way until they end up in the Fire."

8. Sins of the limbs

The biggest crime, the fundamental sin, is godlessness and the denial of Allah. Allah, glory be to Him, says: "*Say: 'Shall I inform you of the greatest losers in their actions? Those whose efforts in the life of this world are misguided while they suppose that they are doing good.' Those are the people who reject their Lord's Signs and the meeting with Him. Their actions will come to nothing and, on the Day of Rising, We will not assign them any weight. That is their repayment – Hell – because they disbelieved and made a mockery of My Signs and My Messengers.*" (18:103-106)

Allah, Exalted is He, in His Noble Qur'an, gives a likeness of the unbelievers, and indicates the causes of unbelief and its consequences: He says: "*Recite to them the tale of him to whom We gave Our Signs, but who then cast them to one side and Shaytan caught up with him. He was one of those lured into error. If We had wanted to, We would have raised him up by them. But he gravitated towards the earth and pursued his whims and base desires. His likeness is that of a dog: if you chase it away, it lolls out its tongue and pants, and if you leave it alone, it lolls out its tongue and pants. That is the likeness of those who deny Our Signs.*" (7:175-176)

As for sins of the limbs, Allah mentions many of them in the Qur'an in the following verses: *"Say: 'Come and I will recite to you what your Lord has made unlawful for you': that you do not associate anything with Him; that you be good to your parents; that you not kill your children because of poverty. We will provide for you and them; that you not approach indecency, outward or inward; that you do not kill any person Allah has made inviolate – except with the right to do so. That is what He instructs you to do so that perhaps you will use your intellect. And that you do not go near the property of orphans before they reach maturity – except in a good way; that you give full measure and full weight with justice – We impose on no self any more than it can bear; that you be equitable when you speak, even if a near relative is concerned; and that you fulfil Allah's contract. That is what He instructs you to do, so that perhaps you will pay heed. This is My Way and it is straight, so follow it. Do not follow other ways or you will become cut off from His Way. That is what He instructs you to do, so that perhaps you will be godfearing."* (6:152-154)

The account of the Blessed Journey contains some symbolic representations to exemplify some of the sins of the limbs; but does not mention them all, for it was not the purpose of the Night Journey to be an exhaustive study of sin. Here are some of the ways that those who committed sins of the limbs were represented.

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace came across some people with a pot of good well-cooked meat before them and next to it another pot containing lean rotting meat. They would eat of the lean rotting meat and leave the good well-cooked meat. He asked, "Who are these people, Jibril?" He replied, "These are the men of your Community who would forsake good wives who were lawful for them and spend the night with evil women who were unlawful for them, and the women of your Community who would forsake their good lawful husbands to spend the night with evil men who were unlawful for them. Allah, glory be to Him, says: *"A woman and a man who commit fornication: flog both of them with one hundred lashes and do not let compassion for either of them possess you where Allah's Deen is concerned, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. A number of believers should witness their punishment."* (24:2)

Then he came upon a man who had gathered together a huge bundle of firewood. Although the bundle was so big that he could not carry it, he continued to add to it. He asked, "What is this, Jibril?" He replied, "This a man from your Community who was in charge of looking after other people's trusts, but could not discharge his trusts and give them back to their owners, although he wanted to be put in charge of them." The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "The one who has no trust has no faith."

He also saw a tray laden with good meat and another laden with rotten meat. People were sitting round the rotten meat eating it and left the good meat alone. Jibril said, "These are the people who forsake what is lawful and devour the unlawful."

He passed by a people with snouts like camels devouring hot coals which would go through them and emerge from the lower parts of their bodies. Jibril said, "These are the ones who devour the wealth of orphans unjustly."

Those who commit sins of the limbs and then do not repent will be in the Fire. As for their punishment therein, that will vary according to the type of sin they committed.

As for the Fire itself, during the Night Journey the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, passed by a valley from which he heard a terrible sound and from which exuded a rotten smell. So he said, "What is this, Jibril?" Jibril replied, "That is the voice of Hell saying, "My Lord, give me what You promised me. My chains and shackles have become numerous, as have my flames, boiling waters, bitter fruits, scalding pus and punishments. My pits are deep and my fires are extremely hot, so give me what You promised me." Allah says, "You shall have every idolater and idolatress, every unbelieving man and woman and every tyrant who does not believe in the Day of Reckoning." Hell will say, "I am content with that"."

9. Arrival at Jerusalem

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, arrived at Jerusalem. Anas ibn Malik related that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "Then I went into the mosque

and prayed two *rak'ats* inside. Then I went out and Jibril, peace be upon him, came to me bearing a vessel of wine and a vessel of milk. I chose the milk." Jibril said, "You have chosen the natural form." In other words, the Prophet chose milk, by which a person's constitution is built. An-Nawawi commented that what is meant by natural form (*fitra*) in this *hadith* is Islam and rectitude.

So far as Islam is concerned, wine is the mother of all evils. Indeed, Allah, glory be to Him, describes it as being filth from the handiwork of Shaytan. Allah curses those who drink it, those who sell it, those who carry it and those who have it brought to them. He also curses anyone who presses the grapes to make it and anyone who trades in it in any form. Beer and other alcoholic beverages are considered to be types of *khamr* ('wine'), for if a large quantity of any substance intoxicates then even a small amount of that substance is unlawful.

The narration of Ibn Mas'ud is very similar to that of Anas mentioned above. He related that the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said: "Then I went into the mosque and saw the Prophets, some of them standing in prayer, some of them bowing and some of them in prostration. Then somebody gave the call to prayer and the *iqama*, so we stood in rows ready to pray, looking to see who would lead us in prayer. Thereupon, Jibril took me by my hand and pushed me forward, and I led them in prayer."

10. By the Lote Tree of the Furthest Limit, beside which is the Garden of Refuge

Then the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was taken up into the highest heavens. He traversed the heavens one by one, until he had gone beyond the whole of existence and arrived at the Lote Tree of the Furthest Limit, beside which is the Garden of Refuge: the Garden in which the slaves of Allah who are godfearing make their home. There the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, smelled a cool sweet breeze that smelt like musk and heard a sound. He asked, "What is this, O Jibril?"

He said, "That is the voice of the Garden. It is saying, 'My Lord, give me what You promised me. My chambers have become plentiful, as has my brocade, silk and sarcenet. I have many carpets, pearls and corals and much silver and gold. My goblets, platters, jugs and vessels have become numerous, as have my honey, milk, water and wine, so give me what You promised me. ' Allah replied, 'You shall have every Muslim man and Muslim woman, every believing man and believing woman, and everyone who believes in Me and My Messengers, acts rightly and does not associate anything with Me or take partners besides Me. If someone fears Me and asks Me for something, I have granted that to him. If someone makes a good loan to Me, I will reward him for it; and if someone relies on Me, I am enough for him. I am Allah: There is no god but Me and I do not break My promise. It is the believers who are successful. Blessed be Allah, the Best of Creators!' The Garden replied, 'I am satisfied with that.'"

11. When that which covers the Lote Tree covers it

Keeping 'that' undefined clearly emphasises the word and makes the meaning so much more profound. It is as if that which covers it is something that no language could possibly define and no intellect could possibly comprehend. Another linguistic device used in this verse is that Allah, glory be to Him, uses the present tense to speak of something that occurred in the past. He does so in order to make the picture more vivid and also to indicate that this covering is something that is continuous.

This 'thing that covers' is defined in a number of *hadiths*. Al-Hasan related that "The Light of the Lord of Power, Majestic be He, covers it," and Abu Hurayra narrated something similar when he said, "The Light of the Truth, glory be to Him, covers it."

12. Witnessing

Allah, glory be to Him, says: "*Then he drew near and hung suspended. He was two bow-lengths away or even closer.*" (53:8-9)

Ibn Hajar said, "Al-Umawiyy transmitted in his *Maghazi* from al-Bayhaqi from Muhammad ibn 'Amr from Abu Salama from Ibn 'Abbas, who said that the meaning of Allah's statement '*He saw him again another time*' was that his Lord drew near to him." Ibn Hajar went on to say, "This is a *hasan* transmission; it is a strong proof of the reliability of the transmission of Sharik and its meaning is of the same kind as that in 'Our Lord descends'."

Then we come to the next question: did Muhammad see his Lord? Did he see the Majestic and Beautiful?

In our response to this question we would like to start by quoting what as-Sawi said in his commentary on the verses of the Quran: "*There is not one of us who does not have a known station. We are those drawn up in ranks. We are those who glorify.*" (37:164-166) He stated that these verses are an account of the angels acknowledging their own slavehood and refuting those who worship them. The meaning of the statement is "There is not one of us who does not have a known level of knowledge and station in which he worships; and there is not one of us who does not obey the commands of Allah." Ibn 'Abbas said, "There is no inch of the earth without an angel upon that spot praying and glorifying Allah."

According to as-Sawi: "It is said that these three verses descended upon the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, while he was by the Lote Tree of the Furthest Limit. Jibril held back when he came to the Lote Tree, so the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asked him, 'Are you going to part with me here?' Jibril replied, 'I cannot go beyond this place of mine.' Thereupon, Allah revealed the verses '*There is not one of us who does not have a known station. We are those drawn up in ranks. We are those who glorify.*' (37:164-166). Jibril stopped where he was and Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, went closer."

Many scholars have taken the view that the interpretation of the verse "*Then He drew near and hung suspended. He was two bow-lengths away or even closer. Thereupon, He revealed to His slave what He revealed*" is that it is about the ascent of the Prophet, peace be upon him, to the Divine Presence and the closeness of Allah to him. Then he went even higher than that two bow-lengths away to a degree of closeness that only Allah knows, until he came to

the Lote Tree of the Furthest Limit and Allah revealed to His slave what He revealed, part of which, of course, was the command to perform fifty prayers every day. This interpretation is the most obvious one.

According to at-Tayyibi, al-Alusi related: "Anyone with intelligence and a clear heart must obviously reject the interpretation that makes Jibril the subject of 'He revealed'. He suggests that the meaning of the verse is that Jibril revealed to the slave of Allah. He must reject this, for those who truly possess hearts (i.e. those whose hearts are alive) – taste nothing from that except that it is the whisperings of two people confiding secrets in one other and that interpretation could not even be conceived, let alone comprehended.

According to the interpretation that 'He drew near' refers to Allah, the word '*thumma*' ('then') in 'then He drew near' is used to indicate a change of rank, from the rank of Jibril to the rank of Allah, and not a change in time. The difference between the two approaches to the interpretation of this verse is that in the first approach, where the subject of 'He revealed' is considered to be Jibril, the Revelation is through an intermediary and by means of teaching, whereas in the second approach, where the subject of 'He revealed' is Allah, revelation is without an intermediary and bestows honour upon the recipient.

It is related that Ja'far as-Siddiq said: "When the beloved one achieved the ultimate level of closeness, he experienced the ultimate level of fear and awe, and so Allah treated him with the ultimate level of kindness (*lutf*). This is because a man may not bear the burden of the ultimate level of fear and awe unless he also receives the ultimate level of kindness. That is what is represented in Allah's statement "*Thereupon He revealed to His slave what He revealed.*" In other words, it was as it was; that which happened, happened; the Lover said to His lover what a lover says to his lover; was kind to His lover in the way that a lover is kind to his lover; and whispered to him what a lover whispers to his beloved one. Then His beloved one kept what He told him secret and did not reveal it to anyone."

Ibn al-Farid indicates this view in one of his poems:

I secluded myself with the Beloved,
and between us there is a secret more delicate and subtle
than the breeze that blows in the night."

Most of the Sufis accept this interpretation and agree that it is Allah, Mighty and Exalted, Who draws near to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and that His drawing near is in a manner appropriate to Him.

Some people also say that the meaning of Allah's words "*His eye did not waver nor did he turn away*" (53:17) is that the gaze of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, did not waver. His eyes did not turn to look at the adornments of the Garden or the moanings of the Fire, but remained fixed on the Truth. He did not turn away from the Straight Path.

Abu Hafs as-Suhrawardi said, "His eye did not waver as it did fall behind his inner sight or contract and become small, and it did not 'exceed its bounds', as it did not precede his inner sight or exceed its proper station."

There is no doubt that witnessing takes on different forms, depending upon the rank of the one doing the witnessing, and that witnessing occurs in a manner befitting Allah. As for how it actually takes place, that is something that no one knows except Allah.

Chapter 10

Methods of Proving Prophethood

People vary as regards their aptitude in proving Prophethood. There are many methods that have been used by various scholars, and purely by mentioning these methods we can show how valuable they were in fulfilling that task. Indeed, because of the clear way in which the scholars have expressed themselves there is no need for us to supplement their positions with lengthy commentary. Their own explanations will suffice.

In this chapter we plan to relate some of the methods used by various scholars to prove the fact of Prophethood, but without putting them in any particular order. The extracts we use, however, are only those that can be deemed the most valuable and pertinent. In the course of this chapter, the reader will see different and varied approaches to this topic. Some will use logic and some will use wisdom and reason, but it will be the wisest sort of wisdom and the most beautiful sort of logic.

In the course of this chapter, the reader will also be exposed to different types of intellectual proofs, some of which derive from the personal experiences of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, during his life; some from his great teachings; some from the trust and confidence that his Companions had in him; some from the praiseworthy effects upon society that the Message had; some from a combination of some of these things; and, some from a combination of all of them.

Some of those who had associated closely with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, before his Mission, believed in him without needing any proof because they knew him to be trustworthy, truthful and wise. What more did they need to know? They had known him as a blessed boy, a trustworthy young man and a mature man, and so they believed in him as soon as they heard what had happened to him.

The rational proofs utilised by these great men provide the reader with both intellectual and spiritual enjoyment. We ourselves have followed the method of Qur'an in proving prophethood, and that is the same method used by al-Ghazali and the great scholar Ibn Khaldun.

In order that our method be absolutely clear from the first, we would like to begin by giving the reader a brief glimpse of the Qur'an's method, then follow that with an extract from some of al-Ghazali's thoughts, and then quote from Ibn Khaldun to demonstrate his approach to it. All three of these methods are quite universal and they approach the proof of prophethood from several different angles. After these three, some of the more specific methods will follow.

The Qur'anic way of proving Prophethood is to mention many different proofs which, when taken as a whole, endow one with certainty. The Qur'an challenges both Arabs and non-Arabs, and both mankind and *jinn* to produce something like it, or even to produce just one chapter like it. Additionally, the Qur'an was, and remains, the miracle of the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. However, we have already discussed that at length in a different chapter.

Despite this, both the Qur'an and the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, adduced many other proofs to testify to the fact of his Prophethood. And why was there any element of doubt about his Messengerhood when, if he had informed his people that there was an army behind a mountain about to attack them, they would have believed him? He had lived amongst them for forty years before that, and had not spoken to them once about Prophethood or about his Message. For the whole matter is determined purely by the will of Allah: "*Say: 'Had Allah so wished, I would not have recited it to you, nor would He have made it known to you. I lived among you for many years before it came. Will you not use your intellect?'*" (10:16)

The Qur'an demands of them that they reflect upon the nature of their companion who had been born amongst them and spent his early years in full sight and hearing of them. Indeed, they knew him as well as they knew their own children. They knew his truthfulness, trustworthiness, and well-balanced intellect. Allah says:

"Say: 'I exhort you to do one thing alone: to stand before Allah in pairs and on your own and then reflect. Your companion is not possessed. He is only a warner come to you ahead of a terrible punishment.'" (34:46)

Why is there doubt about his status, when he was free of all worldly ambition? Allah says: *"Say: 'I have not asked you for any wage: it is all for you. My wage is the responsibility of Allah alone. He is witness of everything.'"* (34:47)

Why is there doubt about his status, when he was unlettered – he could neither read nor write – and anyone who is unlettered could not possibly have taken what he said from a book? Allah says: *"You never recited any Book before it, nor did you write one down with your right hand. If you had, the purveyors of falsehood would have voiced their doubts."* (29:48)

These circumstances and these surrounding conditions, not to mention the Qur'an itself, show that Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was truthful in his claims.

Al-Ghazali and the Proof of Prophethood

Al-Ghazali consoled himself by utilising the following method: he saw that irrevocable proof could not be obtained by taking only one approach to proving Prophethood. He saw that certainty is only achieved by having plenty of different sorts of evidence and then putting them all together. He saw that a miracle when taken on its own does not give some people certainty. The miracles of Musa, peace be upon him, did not cause Pharaoh and his people to believe, but rather caused them to say that he was a lying magician. They did not give certainty to the people to whom 'Isa, peace be upon him, preached. If they had given them certainty, they would all have believed in him; but in fact, only a pitiful few did.

Indeed, those peoples whom Allah destroyed had Prophets who came to them with miracles. Furthermore, the peoples asked for those miracles. When the miracles came, they denied them, turned away and did not respond to the call of guidance. If miracles are not sufficient then what is the correct method of proving

Prophethood, as seen by al-Ghazali? We will let al-Ghazali answer that in his own words:

If you have any doubt in your mind as to whether a particular person is a prophet or not, there is no way of being certain about it unless you know what his states are. This knowledge may be gained by seeing them, finding out about them through multiple chains of transmission, or hearing about them.

If you have some knowledge of medicine or *fiqh*, then it would be possible for you to know doctors or *faqih*s by seeing their states or hearing what they had to say, even if you never actually physically saw them. Therefore, by studying medicine or *fiqh* and then reading their books and published works, one could know that ash-Shafi'i was a *faqih*, and that Galen was a doctor, without having to rely on anybody else's view on the matter.

In the same way, if you were to understand the true meaning of prophethood, and then look deeply into the Qur'an and study the *hadith* literature, you would inevitably come to know that Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was a man who had reached the highest levels of prophethood. You can become even more certain of this by putting the things that he said to the test when it comes to acts of worship and the effects that they have in purifying the heart. Then, for example, you will see how he spoke the truth when he said, 'Whoever acts by what he knows, Allah will bequeath him knowledge of what he does not know'; how he spoke the truth when he said, 'If anyone helps a tyrant, Allah will give the tyrant authority over him', and how he spoke the truth when he said, 'Whoever wakes up in the morning with *taqwa* being his only concern, Allah will spare him the anxieties of this world and the Next'.

If you performed this test with one thousand, two thousand, or even several thousand Prophetic sayings, you would come to the inescapable conclusion that Muhammad was a Prophet who spoke the truth.

Certainty about prophethood may be acquired in this way and not by the fact that the Prophet in question had changed a stick into a snake, or split the moon in two; for, if you were to look at the miracles on their own without considering the circumstances, you might think that they were mere magic, deception or misguided-

ance from Allah, as He says, Exalted is He, '*He misleads whom He wills and guides whom He wills.*'

It is also possible that you will be questioned about these miracles. If your faith is founded on the basis of a particular miracle, then it may easily be destroyed by another person casting doubt on the way in which that miracle had occurred.

The occurrence of miracles should be but one of the proofs and circumstances upon which you base your view, and you should continue to acquire other proofs until you have attained such a level of certainty that you are no longer able to pinpoint any specific reason for reaching your conclusion (because there are so many of them). So, for example, if a group of people were to inform you of news that they had received through multiple transmissions, you would not be able to say that your certainty regarding the truth of the report was on account of any particular person's words, or that a specific transmission was the key. That is how it is with strong faith based on action.

As for tasting, that is witnessing, or taking something that is handed down directly from one person to another, it is only available to those who practise Sufism.

This essay on the reality of Prophethood is long enough for my purposes here, and I will mention later how we are in need of it.

Ibn Khaldun and the Proof of Prophethood

Ibn Khaldun says in the sixth chapter of his valuable book, *al-Muqaddima*:

Know that Allah has chosen certain individuals from the human race. He honoured them by addressing them, created them with an innate knowledge of Him, and made them intermediaries between Himself and His slaves. He made it their task to teach their fellow men what is best for them, to encourage them to right guidance, and to pull them back from the Fire and guide them towards salvation.

Some of the knowledge that Allah gave to these individuals – certain of the wonders and statements that He manifested on their tongues – were things about which men would have had no means of knowing, except by means of these individuals who had learnt it directly from Allah, and had then conveyed the knowledge to mankind. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “Truly I know nothing except that which Allah has taught me.” Know that the information they convey to us is intrinsically and necessarily true, and this will become clearer when the reality of prophecy is explained.

The sign by which this type of human being may be recognised is that in the moment of Revelation they seem to become detached from those around them, as if losing awareness of their surroundings. It looks to the onlooker as though they are overcome by a state of unconsciousness or deep sleep, whereas in fact their state of immersion is due to their encounter with the spiritual realm, for their perceptions and awareness are beyond those of ordinary men. Then their consciousness is brought down to the plane of human perception, and they receive Revelation either by hearing the sound of speech which they are able to understand, or by having an angel come to them in the form of a man delivering Allah’s revelation to them. Then the state leaves them, and they are left aware of what has been revealed to them.

When the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was asked about Revelation, he said: “At times, it comes to me like the ringing of a bell. That is the hardest for me. Then it leaves me, and I remain aware of what was said. At other times, the angel appears to me in the form of a man and speaks to me. I retain the things he says to me.” During that process, the person receiving the Revelation shows inexplicable signs of strain and choking. Tradition says: “He experienced hardship from the process of Revelation”

‘Aisha said: “The Revelation might come to him on a very cold day, but by the time it had left him his forehead would be pouring with sweat.” And Allah says: “*We will impose a Weighty Word upon you.*” (73:4)

On account of the state that would befall them when Revelation descended upon them, idolaters used this to accuse their

Prophets of being possessed by *jinn* and say about them: "He follows the *jinn*." So, the outward manifestation of this state confused them and led them to false conclusions: "*He whom Allah misleads has none to guide him.*"

Another sign by which Prophets may be recognised is that even before receiving Revelation their character is pure and good, and they have an aversion to filth and blameworthy action. That is the meaning of the term '*isma*' (that they are protected from committing wrong action). It is as if their very natures have been created in such a way that they shun and despise wrong actions: as if wrongdoing were contradictory to their constitution.

In the *Sahih* Collections, we find: "When the Prophet was a young man, he was carrying stones with his uncle al-'Abbas to the Ka'ba to rebuild it. He placed them in his cloak, and in the process, uncovered his privates. As soon as this had happened, he fell down in a swoon that lasted until he was covered up again with his cloak. On another occasion, he was invited to a wedding party in which there was much merrymaking. But, before he could go, he fell fast asleep, and slept until the sun rose. Thus, he did not partake with the others in their merriment, but was held back by Allah from doing any of that. It was even his nature to avoid eating disagreeable foods. Thus he never touched onions or garlic. When he was asked about that, he said: "I am in close communion with those with whom you do not communicate [i.e. the angels]".

Pay attention then to what the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, told Khadija when the state of Revelation first came upon him and he wanted to know what it meant. She told him to embrace her, and when he did so his state left him. Thereupon, she said, "It is an angel who was with you, not a *shay-tan*." (She meant that it must have been an angel because it would not come close to women.)

Then she asked him what colour garments the angel liked to wear best when he came to see the Prophet. He replied, "White and green garments." She said, "It is an angel." (She meant that green and white are the colours of goodness and the angels, whereas black is the colour of evil and Shaytan.)

Another sign by which they may be recognised is that they call people to the *Deen* and acts of worship, such as the prayer, *zakat*,

and abstinence. Both Khadija and Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with them both, saw that (i.e. calling people to acts of worship) as proof of the Prophet's truthfulness. They needed no more proof of his Mission except his good character and fine state.

In the *Sahih* Collections, we find that when the letter of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, came to Heraclius calling him to Islam, he summoned all the Qurayshis that he could find in his land in order to ask them what the Prophet was like. One of these Qurayshis was Abu Sufyan. One of the questions he asked was, "What does he command you to do?" Abu Sufyan replied, "He commands us to establish the prayer, to pay *zakat*, to maintain the ties of kinship, and to practise abstinence." After he had asked all his questions and heard all of Abu Sufyan's answers, he said, "If what you say is true then he is a Prophet and he will come to take possession of the land upon which I am standing."

The 'abstinence' to which Abu Sufyan had referred is '*isma*' ('immunity from sin'). Please note how Heraclius saw '*isma*', calling people to the *Deen*, and calling then to acts of worship, to be proofs of the legitimacy of his Prophethood: he did not require a miracle to verify it. This story, then, indicates that calling people to the *Deen* and to acts of worship is indeed one of the signs of Prophethood.

Another sign by which the Prophets may be recognised is that they possess prestige and noble lineage amongst their people. In the *Sahih* Collections, we find that "Allah only sends a Prophet who holds a position of strength amongst his people." Another variant has, "Allah does not send a Prophet unless he has a position of wealth amongst his people." Al-Hakim quoted this variant in his commentary on the two *Sahih* Collections.

The account of Heraclius's questioning of Abu Sufyan in the *Sahih* Collections relates that Heraclius asked, "What is his standing amongst you?" Abu Sufyan replied, "He has a position of prestige amongst us." Thereupon Heraclius said, "Messengers are sent from families who possess prestige among their people". (What is meant by this is that a Messenger must have a group of people around him who will continue to protect him from harm at the hands of the unbelievers, until he has finished conveying the

Message of his Lord and brought Allah's *Deen* to the level of perfection that He desired for it.)

Khadija becomes Muslim

Ibn Khaldun discusses how Khadija, may Allah be pleased with her, and Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, became Muslim. He observed that "They needed no more proof of his Mission than his good character and fine state."

But how did Khadija come to Islam? The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, returned to his house after the Revelation had descended unexpectedly upon him in the Cave of Hira'. He returned with trembling heart and went in to Khadija bint Khuwaylid, saying, "Cover me! Cover me!"

They covered him until the fear had left him. Then he told Khadija, "I feared for myself that I had gone mad." Thereupon Khadija said, "That could never be the case, by Allah! Allah would never humiliate you like that, for you maintain your family ties, receive your guests with hospitality, take on other people's burdens, give to the destitute, and help those afflicted by calamity."

By saying that, Khadija, may Allah be pleased with her, had become Muslim, for she had affirmed that Muhammad had come with the truth, believed in him, and sworn that Allah had taken the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, under His care and protection. She justified this by what she knew of his compassionate nature and noble character. She was thus the first person to embrace Islam after the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. The only reason she later went to talk with Waraqa and others was to clarify, for her and for the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, exactly what the vision of the Messenger, peace be upon him, was. Her faith came before her questioning of Waraqa.

Khadija, may Allah be pleased with her, on account of her intimate relationship with the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, warrants a closer study. With that in mind, we have written the following few paragraphs.

She, may Allah be pleased with her, was known by certain praiseworthy appellations. The great historian, Ibn Ishaq, said about Khadija, may Allah be pleased with her, "Khadija was the Vizier of Truthfulness." According to as-Suhayli, the author of *ar-Rawd al-umuf*: "Khadija bint Khuwaylid was known as 'the Pure One' both before and after the advent of Islam." We read in the *Sira* of at-Tayyimi, "She was called 'the Mistress of the Women of the Quraysh'."

'A'isha, may Allah be pleased with her, said: "Whenever the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, mentioned Khadija, he never tired of heaping praise upon her and asking forgiveness for her. One day he mentioned her and my jealousy caused me to say, 'Allah has given you me in exchange for someone who was old.' I saw him become angry, so I let my hand drop and said to myself, 'O Allah, if You cause Your Messenger's anger with me to subside, I will never again speak ill of her.' When the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, saw what I had said about Khadija, he asked me, "How could you say that? By Allah, she believed in me when people rejected me and consoled me when people refused me. She provided me with children, and you have not.' Then he left and remained apart from me for one month on that account."

Our purpose here is not to provide a history of the life of 'the Mistress of the Women of the Quraysh', but to illustrate certain aspects of her life to show the exalted station to which she had attained, her fine intellect, pure nature, perceptiveness and mental acumen. According to reliable sources, her relationship with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, began when he came to work for her as a trader. She came to know him in that way and was able to view him from close quarters. She observed him and noticed in him the many fine attributes that graced his character. More than one person spoke to her about her trading representative. Indeed, Maysura said something very evocative to her that caused her much wonderment. The notion of asking Muhammad to marry her started to form in her pure heart and gradually became stronger and stronger. She was not one to rush matters, however.

Then one day she went to her uncle, Waraqa ibn Nawfal, and mentioned to him what she had seen of the attributes and states of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and told him about Maysura's account of what he seen and heard from him. Thereupon, Waraqa said, "If all that you have said is true, Khadija, then Muhammad must be the Prophet of this community. I have known that there is a Prophet due to come to this community, and this is his time."

Khadija returned from her uncle's place with the thought of marrying the Prophet even more crystallised in her mind and more attractive to her. However, the reasons for this attraction were not physical ones, even though Muhammad was one of the most handsome men. Nor did wealth play any part in her considerations – for Muhammad was not a wealthy man, even though he was astute and intelligent enough to become wealthy if he had wanted to be. What truly attracted her to him were his noble attributes and fine character; his clear and transparent spirituality; and the light which illuminated him, became concealed, and then shone forth from him once again.

Then, one day, the virtuous Khadija took the first steps towards marriage. The first step she took, as far as we can see, has been related by al-Fakihi in his book *Makka*. "Anas related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was at Abu Talib's house. He asked his permission to go to Khadija and Abu Talib granted him permission, but sent a slave-girl called Nab'a after him with instructions to find out what Khadija would say to him. Nab'a said, 'I saw a marvel. As soon as Khadija heard that he had come, she went to the front door and said to him, "I hope that you are the Prophet who will be sent to us. If you are he, then recognise my right and position and supplicate on my behalf to the God who sent you." He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, replied, "By Allah, if I am indeed he, then you have done something for me that I will never let go to waste. If I am other than he, then the God for Whom you have done this will never let your action go to waste."'"

Ibn Hajar also related this story and did not declare it to be weak. There is no doubt whatsoever that the intention of Khadija was a noble one; and Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant

him peace, recognised that fact when he told her, "Then the God for Whom you have done this will never let your action go to waste." In other words, she had only done this thing for the sake of the True God, whose Messenger she believed Muhammad would become.

The second step was that which Nafisa bint Munabbih related: "Khadija bint Khuwaylid was a noble and resolute woman possessing the properties of goodness and generosity with which Allah willed to honour her. At that time, she was the best-born woman of the Quraysh, as well as being the noblest and most wealthy. All of her people desired to gain her hand in marriage if it were in any way possible for them to do so. Many had already asked for her hand and expended money and efforts to achieve that, but she had rebuffed them all. Thereupon, Khadija sent me in secret to Muhammad after he had brought back her caravan from Syria. I asked him, 'Muhammad, what prevents you from getting married?'

"He replied, 'I do not have the means to marry.'

"I said, 'If you were to have enough means, and receive a proposal from a lady of beauty, wealth, honour and equal status to you, would you accept?'

"He asked, 'Who is she?'

"I answered, 'Khadija.'

"He said, 'How is that possible?'

"I replied, 'I will be responsible for arranging it.'

"He said, 'I will do it.' I went and informed her of that."

The matter had become clear in the mind of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

The third step was that which led directly to the marriage. According to as-Suhayli: "Khadija was a resolute, noble and intelligent woman possessing the characteristics that Allah had honoured her with. When Maysara told her the things he told her, she sent for the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace – or so they claim – and said, "Son of my uncle, I wish to marry you because of your kinship, your high standing amongst your people, your trustworthiness, your good character and your truthfulness in speech". Then she offered herself to him in marriage. At that time, Khadija was the best-born woman of the

Quraysh, as well as being the noblest and most wealthy. All of her people desired to gain her hand in marriage, if it were in any way possible for them to do so. Agreement was reached about everything."

The family of 'Abdu'l-Muttalib, led by Hamza, may Allah be pleased with him, and Abu Talib, came to the house of Khadija, where they were received by the uncle of Khadija, 'Amr ibn Asad, and her cousin Waraqa ibn Nawfal. Abu Talib stood up and made a speech. Some of what he said is as follows: "If Muhammad is weighed up against any other young man of the Quraysh, he will outweigh him in dignity and nobility, and in excellence and mental acumen. Even if he does not have much money, money is naught but a transitory shadow and a loan that may be recovered. He desires Khadija bint Khuwaylid and she desires him."

'Amr was satisfied with that and said, "He is a stallion who cannot be spurned." Waraqa was also satisfied and the marriage was carried out.

This is the first extract from her life and it is a clear proof of her deliberation and maturity, and of her mental acumen, her taking things a step at a time, and her shrewd choices. The second extract is also truly beautiful and wonderful, and demonstrates her clear genius and rare maturity.

Their married life continued in happiness and prosperity. Muhammad took on the role of brother, son and husband to Khadija and she took on the role of sister, daughter and wife to him. There was affection, compassion and love between them, as well as a deep mutual appreciation.

One day, "He returned with a trembling heart and went in to Khadija bint Khuwaylid, saying, 'Cover me! Cover me!'" (al-Bukhari)

The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had not acted like that before, and Khadija noted a marked change in his state. She sat down and waited for him to say something. As she sat, her imagination was running wild, filling her with fear and compassion. She respected his desire to remain alone in his room and did not burst into the room or disturb him. Despite her great love and concern for him, she chose to follow his will and wait for him, even though the wait was a very long one. Finally, he got up,

went to Khadija and gave her an account of the Revelation occurrence, the angel and the advent of the Truth while he was in the Cave of Hira', which account both startled her and made her happy. Then he told her that he had feared he had gone mad. Without delay, and without any sign of lassitude, the vizier Khadija hastened to put his heart at ease. She said, "That never could be the case, by Allah! Allah would never humiliate you like that!"

Why did she say this? She justified this statement by saying, "You maintain your family ties, receive your guests with hospitality, take on other people's burdens, give to the destitute, and help those afflicted by calamity."

This is the rule of the Lord of Power's customary practice with creation, as Khadija had remarked. This rule has precedents and consequences. As for its precedents, they all boil down to one thing and that is compassion, and as for its consequences, they have one unifying feature and that is 'the lack of humiliation'. This was the first rule to be expressed after the Revelation, and Islam backs it up, affirms it and clarifies what is meant by it. There are many principles that can be derived from this rule, such as:

1. 'The Mercy of the All-Merciful extends to those who are themselves merciful to others.'

2. 'If you are merciful to somebody on the earth, the One who is the heavens will be merciful to you.'

3. 'Mercy is only taken away from the heart of a wretched person.' Along with these, are many other principles connected with mercy and compassion.

Khadija became very animated, for a surprising, bewildering, joyous and sweet new element had entered in their calm existence. She felt strongly that a tremendous responsibility had been placed on her shoulders, and indeed she was more than worthy to take on those responsibilities. Her first responsibility, as she saw it, was to establish what had happened as much as possible for the sakes of both her and her husband: she wanted to understand clearly the reasons for it, the ways the events had happened and what their consequences would be.

She wanted to seek out the help of those who had knowledge of these matters on account of their insight and enlightened state, but before she went out she affectionately turned to her husband and, starting to stroke his face, said, "Be joyous for, by Allah, I have known that Allah would only ever do good by you. I testify that you are the Prophet of this community, whose coming the Jews have awaited. My slave's adviser and the priest Bahira told me about that."

She remained with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, until he had eaten, drunk something, and laughed. After he had smiled and laughed, she got up, gathered her clothes about her, went out and came upon a Christian boy called 'Addas, from a family from Nineveh. She said to him, "Addas, I remind you by Allah. Did you not tell me that you have knowledge of Jibril?"

He replied, "Holy! Holy! What does Jibril have to do with this land where people worship idols?"

She said, "Tell me what you know of him."

He said, "He is the faithful servant of Allah who acts as the intermediary between Him and His Prophets. He is the companion of Musa and 'Isa, peace be upon them". Then she mounted her riding-beast and went to the priest, who lived in the vicinity of Makka. When she had come near, he recognised her and said, "What is it, Mistress of the Women of Quraysh?" She replied, "I have come to you to ask you to tell me about Jibril."

He said, "Glory be to Allah, the Most Sacred! What does Jibril have to do with this land where people worship idols? Jibril is the faithful servant of Allah and the Messenger to His Prophets and Messengers. He is the companion of Musa and 'Isa, peace be upon them." Thereupon, she knew with certainty the honour that Allah had bestowed upon Muhammad.

The final part of her trip was that she went to see Waraqa ibn Nawfal, whom she also asked about Jibril. He gave her the same answer that the others had given her, and then asked her what had happened to make her ask such a question. She made him promise that he would not tell anyone what she was about to tell him. He promised, and so she told him, "The son of 'Abdullah, who is always truthful and, I swear by Allah, has never lied and will never

lie, mentioned to me that Jibril descended upon him, told him that he was the Prophet of this community and made him recite the verses that he had been sent with."

Waraqa became alarmed by that and said, "If Jibril has placed his feet on this earth, then he has come down only to bring benefit to the people of this land. He never comes to anyone except a Prophet, for he is the companion of Prophets and Messengers; Allah sends him to them. I have told you what you need to know about him, so send the son of 'Abdullah to me so that I may question him, hear what he has to say and speak with him. I am fearful that it may not have been Jibril, for some *shaytans* take on his form to mislead some men and corrupt them until they lose their intellect and become mad." She left him confident in the fact that Allah would only ever do good to her life's companion. Khadija brought Muhammad to Waraqah and said to Waraqah, "Son of my uncle, listen to what your nephew has to say."

Waraqah asked him, "Nephew, what did you see?"

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, related to him the full account of everything he had seen. Then Waraqah said, "This the *Namus* that Allah sent down upon Musa. If only I were a young man. If only I might live to see the day when your people will cast you out so that I could come to your aid."

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asked, "Are they going to cast me out, then?"

He replied, "Yes! No one has ever brought what you have brought without making enemies. If I am still alive on the day that that happens to you, I will help you and stand by your side."

Khadija filled her lungs with air and then breathed out and gave Muhammad a look full of inexpressible meaning. This was the beginning of a new phase in her relationship with Muhammad: her husband was now a Messenger who had received a Revelation. Khadija wanted to disseminate the happy news and tell others to give them a chance to partake in it, but at the same she knew that the real question which had to be tested was the identity of Jibril. She knew that focusing upon him and making him the pivot upon which the truth of prophethood could be found would bring the matter into clearer focus for her and give her extra certainty. For

she knew that the Muhammad was not a liar, and so the only issue at hand was to find out if Jibril was who he said he was. If he was, then there could be no doubt Muhammad was the Prophet. This was very perceptive of her and demonstrated her great intellect.

Ibn Khaldun said, basing his words on sound *hadiths*. "Pay attention then to what the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, told Khadija when the state of Revelation first came upon him and he wanted to know what it meant. She told him to embrace her, and when he did so his state left him. Thereupon she said, "It is an angel who was in you, and not a *shaytan*." (She meant that it must have been an angel because it would not have come close to a woman.)

Al-Bayhaqi related this story in a little more detail: Khadija, may Allah be pleased with her, asked the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, "Son of my uncle, can you inform me about this companion of yours when he comes to you?" He replied, "Yes." She said, "If he comes to you, inform me."

While the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was with Khadija, Jibril came to him. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, saw him and said, "Khadija, here is Jibril."

She said, "Can you see him now?"

He answered, "Yes."

She said to him, "Sit by my right side." He got up and sat down where she had indicated. Thereupon she said, "Can you see him now?"

He said that he could, and she said, "Get up and sit in my lap."

He did so and she said, "Can you see him now?"

He said that he could, thereupon, she uncovered her head and lifted her veil while the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was sitting in her lap. Then she said, "Can you see him now?" He said that he could not.

She said, "Son of my uncle, rejoice and be of good heart. He is not a *shaytan*, but he is the angel." Then she believed in him and attested to the fact that he had brought the truth. In reality, she had in her heart, believed in him from the very first moment that he had told her about the Revelation.

Ibn Ishaq said: "I told 'Abdullah ibn al-Hasan about this and he said, "I heard my mother, Fatima bint al-Husayn, relate this tradition about Khadija, but in her version Khadija said that she had pulled the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, inside her tunic and that had caused Jibril, peace be upon him, to leave."

Al-Bayhaqi said, "Khadija did this to obtain proof of his Prophethood, taking care over her *deen* and seeking the truth."

This is Khadija, the pure mistress of the women of Quraysh. Adh-Dhahabi described her by saying, "She was one of the perfect women: intelligent, majestic, religious, chaste and generous. She is one of the inhabitants of the Garden." The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to praise her and prefer her to all the other mothers of the believers: she truly was the vizier of truthfulness. All of what we have said here is summarised by Al-Busairi in his blessed *Hamziyya*:

Khadija saw him and was captivated by the piety,
asceticism and modesty that she saw in him,
And she was informed that the wandering cloud
covered him and gave him shade.
And she heard traditions that the time of fulfilling the promise
that the Messenger of Allah would be sent had arrived.
She asked him to marry her, and
what better thing could people of intellect hope for?
Jibril came to him in her house, and she was one
who used her intellect to understand things.
She removed her veil to find out
if it was a Revelation or a swooning state.
Jibril disappeared when she revealed her head,
and would not return until the covering was replaced.
Thereupon it became clear to Khadija that he was the treasure
and alchemy that she had sought."

We will conclude our discussion of Khadija, peace be upon her, with the following two *hadiths*:

'A'isha, may Allah be pleased with her, said, "I have never been so jealous of any of the other wives of the Messenger of Allah, may

Allah bless him and grant him peace, as I was of Khadija. I was jealous of her on account of what I heard from him when he mentioned her, even though he did not marry me until three years after her death had passed. His Lord had commanded him to give her the good news that she would have a house in paradise made of jewelled piping. There will be no tiredness there and no clamour." (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Abu Zur'a related that he heard Abu Hurayra say, "Jibril, peace be upon him, came to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and said, "Messenger of Allah, Khadija is coming to see you carrying a vessel of broth or drink. When she comes to you, convey the greetings of her Lord and my greetings to her, and give her the good news that she will have a house in the Garden made of jewelled piping. There will be no clamour there, and no tiredness." (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Waraqa ibn Nawfal

Waraqa was an Arab of pure and noble origin from the pinnacle of Qurayshi society. As the author of *al-Aghani* has related, "He was one of those who dissociated himself from the worship of idols and went out searching for religion. He read books and refused to eat animals that had been slaughtered for idols."

Waraqa was looking for the true *Deen*, but he was not satisfied with limiting his search to books in the Arabic language, as there was not enough written in Arabic to satiate his desire for knowledge. Therefore he learnt Hebrew. Al-Bukhari said about him, "He was a man who became Christian during the *Jabiliyya* and would copy down the Hebrew book (the Torah) and would write down as much of the Hebrew parts of the Gospels as Allah willed him to do."

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was later asked about Waraq. He answered, "I saw him in my sleep and he seemed to be wearing white clothes. I thought that if he had been of the people of the Fire I would not have seen him in white."

Waraqa was known for his mature intellect, extensive knowledge, and pure sincerity. At the time of the advent of Revelation

he was an old man who had gone blind. He had experienced many things, both in terms of religion and of this world, and no longer desired anything except a good death and doing what he could in the Way of Allah. That was why Khadija had gone to him with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and had told him, "Son of my uncle, listen to what your nephew has to say." When the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, told him what he had seen, Waraqa said, without hesitation, stuttering or delay, "This is the *Namus* which Allah sent down upon Musa." He said that with absolute certainty and firm belief.

What led Waraqa to say that was the fact that he knew from the life of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, that he was not prone to seeking false glory or spurious fame; and he knew that there was no possibility of him being, or becoming, slave to worldly desires. Waraqa heard him say words that had all the hallmarks of what he expected to hear from a Prophet. He heard words that were completely free of disingenuous logic or cunning deception.

The angel came to him unawares: he had not been specifically waiting for the angel, who came to him when he had gone into solitude to obtain the mercy and good pleasure of Allah. He came to him with something he had never before thought about. The angel said to him, "Read!" and he replied that he was not a reader. The angel brought him something that was very strange for him, then took hold of him and squeezed him until he had become exhausted, then released him, then he told him to read again; and the same thing happened a second time and a third time.

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, returned home with a trembling heart and said, "Cover me! Cover me!" When the fear had left him, he told Khadija what he had seen, then said, "I feared that I had gone mad."

Everything in this account is a clear proof of truthfulness and sincerity. If we add to this what Waraqa knew about the life of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, then the only recourse that he had was to believe and affirm the truth. Of course, there was also the light of Allah's Words "*Recite in the Name of your Lord, Who created*" (96:1) that engulfed him.

For, when Waraqa heard this first verse of the Qur'an, he could not help but believe that that which had been recited to him was a heaven-sent Revelation.

"*Read in the Name of your Lord*" stipulates that reading should not be done in the name of a government minister or ruler; or in the name of personal benefit or regional interests; or in the name of the nation or environment; or in the name of any material objective. It should only be in the Name of Allah. If a person only reads for Allah, then his first and last aim is always Allah, the Source of goodness and light, and reading itself becomes goodness and light wherever and whenever he does it. However, Allah did not intend the first word of the Qur'an (*iqra* 'read') to mean reading alone. Rather this word was meant to symbolise a person adopting everything that would be positive for him and leaving everything that would be negative.

Indeed, what is really being said by this first word is, "Read in the Name of your Lord; move in the Name of your Lord; speak in the Name of your Lord; and act in the Name of your Lord. Even if you should refuse to move or act, that also should be in the Name of your Lord." The ultimate meaning of the verse would be, "Make every cause and motive in your entire life and existence for Allah, glory be to Him."

This verse is clearly a positive one in that it encourages people to do things: it encourages people to read, and to do so in the Name of Allah. There are also verses that deal with the negative aspect: they tell people what is incurred by not reading the Name of Allah over something. Allah, the Exalted, says: "*Do not eat any thing over which the name of Allah has not been mentioned. To do so is sheer deviance.*" (6:122) In the same way, slaughtering an animal in front of altars, when the good pleasure of Allah is not intended by it, is also deviance. Anything that has been slaughtered without Allah's Name being mentioned over it is unlawful.

'Read' and Sincerity

When Waraqa heard this first word, he had no recourse but to believe, for what could you say to a person who devotes his whole life, and calls you to do the same? What could you say to a person

who is not seeking for money, fame, leadership or kingship? What could you say to a person whose only desire is for the whole of mankind to read 'in the Name of their Lord' and build their societies in line with His teachings? Could you say to him, "You are a liar"? How do you define truthfulness, then? Could you tell him, "You are a hypocrite"? What is sincerity, in that case?

These first words of the Qur'an led Waraqa to believe as soon as he heard them and he became a Muslim. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, saw him in his sleep, at a later date, dressed in white. He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, commenting on his dream, "I thought that if he had been of the inhabitants of the Fire I would not have seen him in white."

Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him

Abu Bakr was, as Ibn Kathir said, a great-hearted man, a respected leader of the Quraysh and a wealthy man. Ibn Ishaq said: "Abu Bakr was a man whose company was sought after. He was well-loved and easy-going, and possessed more knowledge of the genealogy of the Quraysh than any other person. He also knew more about the faults and merits of people within the tribe. He was a merchant of good character and honesty. His people used to come to him to get his opinion about many different matters because of his extensive knowledge and experience, and because of the pleasantness of his company."

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "I have never called anyone to Islam without them demonstrating some element of reluctance, hesitation or suspicion, except for Abu Bakr." (Ibn Ishaq)

How did he become Muslim? Ibn Ishaq said: "Then Abu Bakr as-Siddiq met the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and said, "Muhammad, is it true what the Quraysh say? That you have abandoned our gods, declared us to be stupid, and declared our fathers to be unbelievers?"

Thereupon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Yes, it is true. I am the Messenger of Allah

and His Prophet. He sent me to convey His Message and, with the Truth, I call you to Allah. For, by Allah, it is the Truth. I call you, Abu Bakr, to worship Allah, One without partner, and to not worship other him. I call you to continuous obedience of Him.” Thereupon he became a Muslim, rejected idols, renounced partners to Allah and recognised the truth of Islam. Abu Bakr returned home a sincere believer.

Everything that we have mentioned here is a confirmation of the words of Ibn Khaldun, that Abu Bakr ‘needed no more proof of the Prophet’s Mission than his good character and fine state’. Perhaps the reader might have noticed the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, never called Khadija, may Allah be pleased with her, to Islam, but only told her the story of what had happened to him, and then she became Muslim on the basis of what she heard, needing nothing else. That was how it was with Waraqa as well.

Abu Dharr al-Ghifari, may Allah be pleased with him

There are many examples and accounts of how deeply the call to Islam entered into the hearts of some of the believers. One of these is the story of how Abu Dharr became Muslim. He said: “I was a quarter of Islam, for three people had become Muslim before me and I was the fourth. I came to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and said, ‘Peace be upon you, Messenger of Allah. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.’ Thereupon I saw the joy in the face of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.”

The *hadith* of Abu Dharr becoming Muslim is an elaborate and awe-inspiring one and has been transmitted in several trustworthy *sahih* collections, such as those of al-Bukhari and Muslim. Different collections have narrated different aspects of this *hadith* that is rich in both meanings and lessons. When news of the Mission of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, reached Abu Dharr, he said to his brother Unays: “Mount up and go to that valley, and get me some information

about the man who claims to be a Prophet who receives communications from Heaven. Listen to what he has to say; then return to me."

Unays made his way to Makka, heard what the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had to say, then returned to Abu Dharr, and told him, "I heard him call people to have good character."

Abu Dharr asked, "What do people say about him?"

He replied, "They say that he is a poet and a magician." (Unays himself was a poet.) Anis continued his account, "I have heard soothsayers and he does not say the things they do. I measured his words against the different metres of poetry and, by Allah, it is not in harmony with any of them. By Allah, he is speaking the truth and they are lying."

Abu Dharr then said to his brother, "Can you take over from me so that I may go to Makka?"

He replied, "Yes, but have care when dealing with the people of Makka, for they have denounced him and are gathering together against him."

Abu Dharr saddled up and set out for Makka, taking with him a vessel of water. When he got there he went straight to the mosque and searched for the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, whom at the time he did not know. He followed the advice of his brother and did not ask anyone about him, and was on his guard when it came to dealing with the inhabitants of Makka. He continued to search until some of the night had passed, then lay down to sleep. 'Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, saw him and knew him for a stranger. He invited him to spend the night in his house and so Abu Dharr followed him home. Neither of them questioned the other about anything until morning arrived. Then Abu Dharr took up his water-skin and provisions and went back to the mosque, where he remained the entire day without seeing the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. Evening arrived and he again lay down to rest. 'Ali passed by and said, "Is it not time for a man to know his resting-place?" Then he took him back to his house, and once again neither of them questioned the other about anything. The third day passed the same way, but, this

time, when they were back in the house, 'Ali said to him, "Will you not tell me what brought you here?"

He replied, "If you give me your word that you will guide me, then I will tell you." He promised, and so Abu Dharr told him. In the morning they cautiously went to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. Abu Dharr began to listen to the Glorious Qur'an and became Muslim during that sitting. Thereupon the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said to him, "Go back to your people and tell them about this matter. Wait there until you receive orders from me."

He replied, "By the One Who sent you with the Truth, I will stand in their midst and openly declare this matter to them."

He went out until he had come to the mosque and shouted out at the top of his voice, "I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah."

Those who were present stood up against him and they became embroiled in a fierce battle. They continued to attack him until they had thrown him to the ground, but al-'Abbas then came and saved him from them. The next day he did the same thing again, they attacked him again and al-'Abbas saved him again. Then Abu Dharr returned to his brother and announced to him acceptance of Islam. Thereupon his brother too became Muslim. Then they went to their mother and she announced her acceptance of Islam. After that, Abu Dharr started to give his people the good news of Islam. May Allah be pleased with him.

The story of Dimad

Dimad was a man from Azd Shanu'a. He specialised in treating mental illnesses. He would treat them by using charms, suggestion, touch and supplication. He held a position in that epoch akin to the position of those we now call psychologists. Muslim and al-Bayhaqi both mention his story. Dimad came to Makka as he used to use charms to cure people from wind spirits. He heard some of the foolish people of Makka saying, "Muhammad is mad." He heard people saying this everywhere, and by that he knew that Muhammad must have a huge importance in that city and society.

Dimad believed what he heard and became very concerned by it. It occurred to him that if he cured him he would acquire great fame and celebrity and a great reward. He enquired, "Where is this man?" Dimad related about himself, "I thought to myself that Allah might heal him at my hand. I met Muhammad and said to him, "I make charms to cure people from wind spirits and Allah heals at my hands whomsoever He wants to heal, so come on." In other words, he was inviting him to submit to him and let him cure him.

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: "Praise belongs to Allah. We praise Him and seek His help. Whomever Allah guides, there is none to mislead him and whomever Allah misleads, there is none to guide him. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, One without partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah."

The eyes of Dimad became attached to the face of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, his ears listened carefully to his words, and his whole being became breathless and focused its attention on him. Then he said, "By Allah, I have heard the words of soothsayers, the words of magicians and the words of poets, but I have never heard words like this." Then he asked the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, to repeat what he had said, and listened to it from all aspects. This repetition was not enough for him, and so he asked to listen to the words a third time. Immediately upon hearing them for the third time, he said, "Give me your hand so that I can pledge allegiance to you on the basis of Islam. These words of yours have reached the deepest parts of the ocean."

What he meant when he said that they had reached the deepest parts of the ocean was that they had lodged themselves in the deepest parts of his soul and become an integral part of his inner being. The Muslims never forgot this stand taken by Dimad and so, later on, whenever their armies had cause to pass by the people of Dimad they would treat them well.

To use Dimad's analogy, the call of *tawhid* reached the deepest parts of the ocean on many occasions. Those who believed did not care that the idolaters harmed them or destroyed their wealth.

Here follows a second narration of Dimad becoming Muslim which supplements the version mentioned above. 'Abdu'r-Rahman al-'Adawi recounted that Dimad said: "I came to Makka to perform *'umra* and sat in a gathering with Abu Jahl, 'Utba ibn Rabi'a and Umayya ibn Khalaf. Abu Jahl said, 'This man is the one who has divided our society, called our dreams foolish, declared those who have died amongst us misguided and denounced our gods.' Then Umayya said, 'The man is without doubt mad.'

His words found its way into my soul and so I said, 'I am a man who cures people from wind spirits.' Then I left the gathering to search for the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace; but I did not find him that day. The next day, I came to him and found him sitting behind the *Maqam* of Ibrahim, peace be upon him, and he was praying. I sat down until he had finished then I moved, sat down beside him and said, 'Son of 'Abdu'l-Muttalib, come closer to me.' He answered, 'As you will.' I said, 'I cure people of wind spirits. If you like, I will treat you. Do not think your state is too severe, as I have treated people who were in a worse state than you and they recovered. I heard your people mention certain bad traits that you have, such as calling their dreams foolish, dividing their society, declaring those who have died amongst them astray and denouncing their gods. When I heard this, I said to myself, "No one says these things unless he is possessed by a *jinn*."' "

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: 'Praise belongs to Allah. I praise Him, seek His help, believe in Him and rely on Him. Whomever Allah guides, there is none to mislead him and whomever Allah misleads, there is none to guide him. I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, One without partner, and I bear witness that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger.'

I had never heard speech as beautiful as this. I asked him to repeat his words and he did so. Then I asked him, 'What do you call me to do?'

He said, 'I call you to believe in Allah, One without partner, remove the idols from your neck, and bear witness that I am the Messenger of Allah.'

I asked, 'What is my reward if I do so?'

He replied, 'You will have Paradise.'

"I said, 'I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, One without partner; I remove the idols from my neck and declare myself free of them; and I bear witness that you are the Slave and Messenger of Allah.' I stayed with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, until I had learnt many chapters of the Qur'an, then I returned to my people."

According to 'Abdullah ibn 'Abdi'r-Rahman al-'Adawi: "The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, sent 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, may Allah be pleased with him, at the head of a raiding party, and they came to a place in which they found twenty camels, which they led away. Then 'Ali ibn Abi Talib found out that the camels belonged to the people of Dimad, so he told them to return the camels and they did so."

The Negus

Umm Salama bint Abi Umayya, the wife of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, recounted: "When we reached Abyssinia, the Negus gave us a fine reception. We felt safe to practise our *deen* and worship Allah, Exalted is He. We suffered no harm and did not hear anything we disliked. When the Quraysh learned about it, they began to plot and decided to send two steadfast men to the Negus and give him gifts of the choicest products from Makka. The thing that the Negus liked the most was leatherwork, and so they collected a great many examples of it for him. They made sure that they had enough gifts for every one of his bishops. They sent 'Abdullah ibn Abi Rabi'a and 'Amr ibn al-'As, gave them their instructions and told them, 'Give every bishop his present before you speak to the Negus about the refugees. Then give the Negus his presents, then ask him to hand over the refugees to you before he has a chance to speak with them.'

They left and came to the land of the Negus, where we were staying in the best of houses and with the best of neighbours. They carried out their instructions until every one of the bishops had received their presents, before they had spoken to the Negus.

They said to every bishop, 'Some foolish fellows from our community have taken refuge in your King's country. They have forsaken the religion of their people and have not entered into yours, but have innovated a new religion that neither of us knows anything about. The noble dignitaries of their people have sent us to the King to ask him to return them to us. When we speak to the King about them, advise him to hand them over to us and not to speak with them, for their own people know better about them and their faults.'

The bishops agreed to do so. The Qurayshis then gave their gifts to the Negus. He accepted them from him, and then they spoke to him saying, 'O King, some foolish fellows from our community have taken refuge in your country. They have forsaken the religion of their people and have not entered into yours, but have innovated a new religion that neither of us knows anything about. The noble dignitaries of their people – their fathers, uncles and families – have sent us to you, O King, to ask you to return them to us. Their own people know better about them and their faults and blameworthy qualities.' There was nothing that 'Abdullah ibn Abi Rabi'a and 'Amr ibn al-'As disliked more than that the Negus should have an opportunity to hear what the Muslims had to say. The bishops, who were standing in attendance, said, 'They have spoken the truth, O King. Their people do indeed know more about them and their faults, so hand them over to them. They will then return them to their homeland and to their people.'

The Negus became angry. Then he said, 'No, by Allah! I will not hand them over to them. I will not abandon these people who have sought my protection, settled in my land and chosen me over all others, until I have first summoned them and asked them about what these two men allege. If it is as you say then I will hand them over and send them back to their people. If it is not as you say, however, then I will prevent you from taking them and will act well towards them.'" (Ibn Ishaq)

The dialogue between the Negus and the Emigrants

According to Umm Salama bint Abi Umayya, the wife of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace:

"Then the Negus sent an emissary to summon the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. When his emissary came to them, they gathered together and spoke amongst themselves, saying, 'What will you say to the man when you come into his presence?' Some of them said, 'By Allah, we will say what we know and what our Prophet, peace be upon him, has commanded us to do. Then whatever will be will be.'

When they came to him, they found that the Negus had gathered his bishops and their holy books around him. He asked them, 'What is this religion that has caused you to split from your people? You have not entered my religion or any other religion that I know about.'

The one who spoke with him was Ja'far ibn Abi Talib. He said, 'O King, we were an ignorant people. We worshipped idols, ate the meat of animals that had died of natural causes, committed atrocities, cut the ties of kinship, acted badly towards our neighbours, and our strong devoured the wealth of the weak. We continued to be like that until Allah sent us a Messenger whose lineage, truthfulness, honesty and virtuousness were known to us. He called us to worship Allah, affirm His Oneness, and renounce the stones and idols that we and our forefathers had formerly worshipped. He commanded us to speak the truth, return things that are held in trust to their owners, maintain the ties of kinship, treat our neighbours well and refrain from committing wrong action or spilling blood. He forbade us to make false testimony, devour the wealth of orphans and make false accusations of adultery against married people. He also commanded us to worship Allah alone and not associate anything with Him. He ordered us to perform the prayer and fast Ramadan (and Ja'far enumerated all the commands of Islam to the Negus). We recognised the truth of his message and believed in him and followed him in what he had brought from Allah. We worshipped Allah alone and did not associate anything with Him. We treated as unlawful that which He had made unlawful for us and treated as lawful that which He had made lawful for us. Then our people became hostile towards us and began to torture and torment us in order to make us renounce our *deen* and the worship of Allah and return to the worship of idols. They tried to make us regard as lawful the evil and dirty

things that we had seen as being lawful before becoming Muslim. After they had begun to overwhelm us, treat us unjustly, make our lives difficult and come between us and our religion, we left and came to your country, and chose you over others. We desired to live in close proximity to you and hoped that we would not be treated unjustly while with you.'

The Negus asked, 'Do you have anything with you which has come from Allah?'

Ja'far replied that he did, so the Negus said, 'Recite it to me.' Thereupon, Ja'far recited to him the first few verses of *Surat Maryam*. The Negus wept until his beard had become wet, and his bishops wept until their books had become wet, when they heard what had been recited to them. Then the Negus said, 'This and that which 'Isa brought have come from the same niche. Go home! I will not hand them over to you and they will not be betrayed.'

When they left his presence, 'Amr ibn al-'As said to his companion, 'By Allah, I will go to him tomorrow and tell him something that will uproot them.'

'Abdullah ibn Rabi'a, who was the purer of the two men as regards his view of us, said, 'Do not do it, for they are our kindred, even if they have gone against us.'

'Amr said, 'I will tell him that they claim that 'Isa son of Maryam is the slave of Allah.'

The next day came, and they came into the presence of the King. 'Amr told him, 'O King, they say something terrible about 'Isa ibn Maryam. Send for them and ask them what they say.' He thereupon sent for them in order to ask them about it. Nothing of that kind had happened to us before. Our people gathered together and asked each other, 'What shall you say about 'Isa son of Maryam when they ask you about him?' Some of them replied, 'By Allah, we will say about him what Allah says and what our Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, brought, and then whatever will be will be.'

'When they entered his presence, he asked them, 'What do you say about 'Isa ibn Maryam?' Ja'far ibn Abi Talib told him, 'We say about him what our Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, has conveyed about him: He is the slave of Allah, His

Messenger, His Spirit and His Word which he cast into the womb of the Virgin Maryam.' The Negus took up a stick from the ground and said, 'By Allah, 'Isa son of Maryam does not exceed what you have said by the length of this stick.'

The bishops around him snorted when he said this, so he told them, 'Even if you snort, by Allah! Go, for you are safe in my country.' Then he said three times, 'Whoever curses you will be fined.' Then he said, 'Even if I were given a mountain of gold, I would not like to harm a single one of you. Return their gifts to them, for I have no need of them.'

They left his presence dejected and rejected, their task having failed, while we remained with him in the best of lands and with the best of neighbours." (Ibn Ishaq)

The Emigrants and the victory of the Negus

Umm Salama continued: "While we were living thus, a man from Abyssinia rose up and tried to snatch the kingdom from the Negus. By Allah, there was never a moment in which we were so sad as at that moment, for we feared that the man might defeat the Negus and then our destiny would be in the hands of a man who did not respect our rights as the Negus did. The Negus went out to confront him, and the Blue Nile lay between the two parties. The Companions of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'Who will go out to the place where the battle is being fought and bring us news?' Az-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwam, who was one of the youngest men from among us, said that he would go. They inflated a water-skin, which he placed under his chest. Then he floated on it and swam across the Nile until he had reached the other side of the river where the two armies had come together. Then he went on until he came into their presence.

Meanwhile, we supplicated to Allah that He grant success to the Negus over his enemy and strengthen his hold over his country; and, by Allah, we continued to do that, waiting anxiously to find out what had happened, until az-Zubayr came running back towards us, brandishing his clothes and saying, 'Rejoice, for the

Negus has been victorious! Allah has destroyed his enemy and strengthened his hold over his country.'

There was never a moment in which we were so happy as at that moment. The Negus returned, Allah having destroyed his enemy, strengthened his hold over his land, and restored the confidence of the people of Abyssinia in him. We stayed with him in the best of situations until we returned to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in Makka." (Ibn Ishaq)

'Umar ibn al-Khattab

'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, may Allah be pleased with him, used to say: "We were not able to pray at the Ka'ba until 'Umar ibn al-Khattab became Muslim. When he became Muslim, he fought against the Quraysh until he was permitted to pray at the Ka'ba, and we prayed there with him. 'Umar entered into Islam after those of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, who emigrated to Abyssinia had left for there."

Ibn Ishaq said: "The way 'Umar became Muslim, as I heard it, is as follows. His sister was Fatima bint al-Khattab, who was married to Sa'id ibn Zayd ibn 'Amr ibn Nufayl. They had both become Muslim, but kept their Islam a secret from 'Umar. Now Nu'aym ibn 'Abdullah an-Nahham was a member of the tribe of Banu 'Adi ibn Ka'b of Makka who had become Muslim. He had also concealed the fact of his acceptance of Islam, fearing what his family would do to him. Khabbab ibn al-Aratt used to frequent the home of Fatima bint al-Khattab in order to teach her Qur'an. One day, 'Umar came out, having strapped his sword to his waist, making for the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and a small group of his Companions, for he had been told that they had gathered together in a house at Safa. There were about forty of them, both men and women, including the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, his uncle Hamza ibn 'Abdi'l-Muttalib, Abu Bakr as-Siddiq ibn Abi Quhafa, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, and a number of other Muslims who

had stayed with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in Makka and had not emigrated to Abyssinia.

Nu'aym ibn 'Abdullah met 'Umar and asked him, 'Where are you going, 'Umar?'

He replied, 'I am making for Muhammad the apostate – the one who has sundered the unity of the Quraysh, called their dreams foolish, denounced their religion and insulted their gods. I am going to kill him.

Nu'aym said to him, "By Allah, you are deceiving yourself, 'Umar. Do you seriously think that the Banu 'Abd Manaf are going to leave you walking upon this earth after you have killed Muhammad? Why do you not return home and set the affairs of your family in order?'

He said, 'What is wrong with my family?'

He replied, 'By Allah, your brother-in-law and nephew, Sa'id ibn Zayd has become Muslim, as has your sister, Fatima bint al-Khattab: they have both taken on the *Deen* of Muhammad, so you should deal with them first.' 'Umar returned in the direction of his sister and brother-in-law. Khabbab ibn al-Aratt was at their house and he had a manuscript with him upon which was written *Surat Ta-Ha* and from which he would read to them. When they heard the voice of 'Umar, Khabbab hid in a small room and Fatima bint al-Khattab took hold of the manuscript and slipped it under her thigh. As 'Umar approached the house, he had heard Khabbab reciting to them both, and so when he went in he said, 'What was that whispering I heard?'

Sa'id replied, 'You did not hear anything.'

He said, 'Yes, I did, by Allah. I have been informed that the two of you have adopted the *Deen* of Muhammad.' Then he hit his brother-in-law Sa'id ibn Zayd, and his sister, Fatima bint al-Khattab, stood up to him in order to protect her husband and so he hit her also, and wounded her.

After he had done that his sister and her husband said to him, 'Yes, we have become Muslim and believe in Allah and His Messenger, so do whatever seems best to you.'

When 'Umar saw the blood flowing from his sister's wound, he regretted what he had done and desisted from harming them any more. Then he said to his sister, 'Give me that manuscript that I

heard you reading just now, so that I can see what it is that Muhammad has brought.' 'Umar was able to read and write.

When he said that, his sister said to him, 'We are afraid about what you will do to it.'

He said, 'Do not be afraid.' Thereupon, he swore by his gods that he would return it to her. When he said that, she hoped that he might become Muslim.

She told him, 'My brother, you are in a state of impurity on account of your *shirk*. Only those who are pure may touch it.' 'Umar got up and performed a full ablution. Then he came back and she gave him the manuscript with *Surat Ta-Ha* written on it. He started to read it, and after he had read the first few verses he said, 'How excellent and how noble these words are!'

When Khabbab heard that, he came out of his hiding place and said, "Umar, by Allah, I hope that Allah has chosen in answer to His Prophet's supplication, for I heard him say yesterday, "O Allah, strengthen Islam by Abu'l-Hakam ibn Hisham or by 'Umar ibn al-Khattab." Come to Allah, 'Umar! Come to Allah!'

Thereupon, 'Umar said to him, 'Guide me to Muhammad, Khabbab, so that I may go to him and become a Muslim.'

Khabbab said to him, 'He is in a house at Safa with a group of his Companions.'

'Umar took up his sword and fastened it to his waist, then headed towards the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and his Companions, and knocked on the door. "When they heard his voice, one of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, stood up, looked through a gap in the door and saw him girt with a sword. He returned to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in a fearful state and said, 'Messenger of Allah, is here and he has his sword with him.'

Hamza ibn 'Abdi'l-Muttalib said to the Prophet, 'Give him permission to enter. If he wants something good then we will give it to him, but if he has come with evil motives we will kill him with his own sword.'

Then the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'Give him permission to enter.' The man admitted 'Umar, and when he came into the room the Messenger of

Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, rose to meet him. Then he grabbed 'Umar by the belt or by the lapels, pulled him towards him violently and said, "What has brought you here, son of al-Khattab? I do not see that you will desist until Allah sends down some calamity upon you.'

'Umar said, 'Messenger of Allah, I have come to you in order to state my belief in Allah and His Messenger and in what he brought from Allah.' The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, shouted such a loud *takbir* that all of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, in the house heard him and knew that 'Umar had become a Muslim." (Ibn Ishaq)

About 'Umar

'Abdullah ibn Hisham said: "We were with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. He took hold of the hand of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, who told him, 'Messenger of Allah, you are more beloved to me than everything except for myself.' The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'No, by the One Who holds my soul in His Hand, you will not truly believe until I am more beloved to you than yourself.' 'Umar said, 'You are now, by Allah, even more beloved to me than myself.' The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'Now you believe, 'Umar.'" (*al-Wafa'*)

'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud said, "We have been mighty ever since 'Umar became Muslim." (al-Bukhari)

The *Amir* of the Believers, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, spoke the truth when he told his Arab companions in Syria, who were from amongst the greatest of the Companions and leaders of the Islamic conquest, but had criticised some of the things he had done and criticised his humility which they saw as being at odds with his position as leader of a great nation, "You were the lowest of people and then Allah made you mighty by Islam. When you start looking for power from anything else, Allah will make you low."

‘Umar possessed great foresight and intuitive knowledge of human nature

‘Abdullah ibn ‘Umar said, “I never once heard ‘Umar speculate about anything, saying, ‘I think that such-and-such and such-and-such will happen,’ except when it would happen exactly as he had predicted. Once, while ‘Umar was sitting down, a handsome man passed by. ‘Umar said, ‘Either I am very mistaken or this man is still following the same religion that he followed during the *Jabiliyya*, or he was their soothsayer. Bring that man to me.’ The man was summoned and ‘Umar told him, ‘Either I am very mistaken or you are still following the same religion that you followed during the *Jabiliyya*, or you were their soothsayer.’ He said, ‘I have never seen a Muslim man received in the way that he has been today.’ ‘Umar said, ‘I will continue to press you until you tell me.’ The man said, ‘I was their soothsayer in the time of the *Jabiliyya*.’ (*Dala’il an-nubuwwa*)

‘Abdullah ibn Salam

Yahya ibn ‘Abdullah related from a man of the family of ‘Abdullah ibn Salam that ‘Abdullah ibn Salam, who was a learned rabbi, said: “When I heard about the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and came to know that his character, name and form were the same as those of the Prophet whose arrival we were expecting, I rejoiced greatly, though I remained silent until the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, came to Madina. When he alighted at Quba’ and stayed for a while among the Banu ‘Amr ibn ‘Awf, one of my men came to me while I was working at the top of a palm-tree and my aunt Khalida bint al-Harith was sitting below me, and gave the news that he had arrived. When I heard the news that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had arrived, I shouted out a *takbir*. When my aunt heard the *takbir*, she said, ‘Even if you had heard that Musa ibn ‘Imran had come, you would not have said *takbir* so loudly.’ I told my aunt, ‘By Allah, he is the brother of Musa ibn ‘Imran and follows the same path. He

has been sent with the same mission.' She asked, 'Nephew, is he the Prophet we have been told about: the one who will be sent near the end of time?'

I told her that he was and she accepted that. Then I went out to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, became Muslim and returned home; I commanded my family to do the same, which they did, and they all became Muslim. I concealed my Islam from the other Jews, then I came to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and said: 'The Jews are a nation of liars. I want you to conceal me in a part of your house where they cannot see me, then ask them to tell you about the position I hold among them but ask them before telling them of my conversion, for if they knew about my Islam beforehand, they would lie to you and curse me'. He hid me in a part of his house and then they came in and spoke to him. Then the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asked them about my position amongst them. They said, "Abdullah ibn Salam is our master and the son of our master. He is our rabbi and our scholar.'

When they had finished speaking, I came out of my hiding place and said to them, 'O Jews, fear Allah and accept that which He has brought, for, by Allah, you know that he is the Messenger of Allah. You find his name and description written down in the Torah. I bear witness that he is the Messenger of Allah. I believe in him, affirm him and recognize him.' They said, 'You have lied,' and then slandered me. I said, 'Messenger of Allah, did I not tell you that they were a lying people? That they were treacherous, deceitful and iniquitous?' I openly proclaimed my Islam and the Islam of my family, and then my aunt Khalida bint al-Harith became Muslim; and her Islam was sincere." (Ibn Ishaq)

Here is another account of how 'Abdullah ibn Salam accepted Islam, which does not contradict the first, but supplements and clarifies it.

'Abdullah ibn Salam heard of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, while he was atop one of his family's palm-trees, harvesting the dates. He hurried to put the dates that he had harvested into a container and came to hear the

Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, while carrying that container. Then he returned home to his family.

Thereupon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asked, "Which of the houses of our people is closest?" Abu Ayyub said, "I am the closest, Prophet of Allah. This is my house and this my door."

The Prophet said, "Go and prepare a place for us to rest." He went and prepared a place for them both to sleep, then came back and said, "Prophet of Allah, I have prepared a place for you both to sleep. Go there with blessings from Allah."

When the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, came, 'Abdullah ibn Salam came to him and said, "I bear witness that you truly are the Messenger of Allah and that you have come with the truth. The Jews know that I am their master and the son of their master, and the most learned man amongst them; and the son of the most learned man amongst them, so send for them and ask them about me before they find out that I have become a Muslim. For if they were to know beforehand that I had become Muslim, they would say things about me which are not true."

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, sent for them and they entered his presence. Then the Prophet of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said to them, "O Jews, woe upon you! Have *taqwa* of Allah. By Allah, there is no god but He. You know that I am truly the Messenger of Allah and that I have come with the Truth, so become Muslim." They replied, "We do not recognize that." He repeated the call three times and every time they replied in the same way. Then he said, "What is the position of 'Abdullah ibn Salam amongst you?"

They replied, "He is our master and the son of our master. He is the most learned amongst us and the son of the most learned."

He said, "What would you say if he had become Muslim?"

They said, "Allah forbid! He would never become a Muslim."

He called, "Ibn Salam, come out to them."

He came out and said: "O Jews, woe upon you! Fear Allah. By Allah, there is no god but He. You know that he is truly the Messenger of Allah and that he has come with the Truth."

They said, "You lie." Then the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, sent them away." (*Dala'il an-nubuwwa*)

At-Tirmidhi and Ibn Nafi' related that 'Abdullah ibn Salam said, "When the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, came to Madina, I went out in order to look upon him. When I saw his face I knew that it was not the face of a liar." (*ash-Shifa'*)

Zayd ibn Sa'na and the signs of Prophethood

'Abdullah ibn Salam said: "When Allah wanted to guide 'Abdullah ibn Sa'na to Islam, 'Abdullah ibn Sa'na said: 'There were none of the signs of Prophethood that I had not known immediately when I looked upon the face of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, except for two: that his clemency precedes his not knowing about a situation or a person, and that someone acting extremely irrationally towards him only increases him in clemency. Therefore, I used to treat him courteously so that I could associate with him and know his clemency and unknowingness.

'The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, came out of his chambers one day accompanied by 'Ali ibn Abi Talib. A man who looked like a Bedouin came up to him on his camel and said, 'Messenger of Allah, the village of the tribe of so-and-so have become Muslim. I used to tell them that if they became Muslim Allah would provide them with plenty; and at the time they were being ravaged by hardship and drought. I fear, Messenger of Allah, that they may leave Islam out of greed, just as they entered it out of greed. Can you send them anything that will help them in their time of need?'

'The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, looked at a man standing beside him – I saw that it was 'Ali. He said, 'There is nothing left, Messenger of Allah.' Thereupon, I approached him and said, 'Muhammad, could you sell me a known quantity of dates (that were not yet in the possession of the Messenger of Allah) from the garden of Banu so-and-so that you will deliver on such-and-such a date?'

‘He said, ‘No, O Jew. I will sell you a known quantity of dates that I will deliver to you on such-and-such a date, but I will not specify that I will take them from the garden of so-and-so.’ We agreed to that and performed our transaction. I opened my purse and gave him eighty *mithqals* of gold in exchange for a known quantity of dates to be delivered at such-and-such a time. He gave the money to the man and said, ‘Hurry back to them and help them with the money of Zayd ibn Sa‘na.’

Two or three days before the deadline when the dates were due to be delivered, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, went out in a funeral procession for one of the men of the Ansar, accompanied by Abu Bakr, ‘Umar, ‘Uthman and some of the other Companions. After he had performed the funeral prayer, he went up to a wall to sit beside it. Thereupon I came to him, grabbed him by his cloak and lapels, looked upon him with a furious expression upon my face and said: “Will you not settle your debt with me, Muhammad? For by Allah the only thing I know about the sons of ‘Abdu’l-Muttalib is procrastination, because I have had dealings with you before!” ‘Umar ibn al-Khattab looked at me with his eyes revolving round in his head from anger like a whirling ball, then screwed his eyes together and said, ‘Enemy of Allah, did you just say to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, what I heard you say and do to him what I saw you do? For, by the One Who sent him with truth, if it were not that I were wary of His Might, I would strike off your head with this sword of mine.” As he said this, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was looking at ‘Umar, smiling and relaxed. Then he said, “Both he and I needed something else from you, ‘Umar. We needed you to command me to fulfil my debts well and command him to make his claim with good manners. Go with him, ‘Umar, and give him his right and give him twenty *sa‘*s extra to compensate for the fear you have caused him.’

‘Umar went with me and gave me my money and gave me the extra *sa‘*s of dates. I asked why he was giving me extra and he told me that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had ordered him to give me extra on account of his

causing me fear. I asked him, 'Do you know who I am, 'Umar?' He said that he did not, so I said, 'I am Zayd ibn Sa'na.'

He said, 'The rabbi?' I confirmed that I was the rabbi.

He asked, 'What made you say what you did to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and do to him what you did?'

I said, "Umar, there were none of the signs of Prophethood that I had not known immediately when I looked upon the face of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, except for two: that his clemency precedes his not knowing about a situation or a person, and that someone acting extremely irrationally towards him only increases him in clemency. Therefore I decided to test him. Now I bear witness to you, 'Umar, that I am content with Allah as a Lord, Islam as a *deen*, and Muhammad as a Prophet. I bear witness to you that half of my wealth – and I am one of the wealthiest of my people – shall be given as *sadaqa* to the community of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.'

'Umar said, 'Or your wealth shall be given as *sadaqa* to some of them, for you do not have enough money to give to them all.' I replied that in that case it would be for some of them.

Then 'Umar and Zayd returned to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and Zayd said to him, 'I bear witness that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is His slave and Messenger.' He believed in him, affirmed him and followed him. He witnessed many things with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and took part in many battles. He was martyred during the Battle of Tabuk while attacking and not retreating. May Allah have mercy on him."

Salman al-Farsi (may Allah be pleased with him)

'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas related that Salman al-Farsi said: "I am a Persian from a village called Jiyy in the province of Isfahan. My father was the principal landowner in the area and loved me a great deal, more than his wealth or any of his other children. Indeed, his love for me was so extreme that he locked me up in his

house as if I were a slave-girl. I was such a zealous Magian that I became the keeper of the Sacred Fire, keeping it well-fuelled and not allowing its flame to go out for even a single moment. My life followed this course, and I did not know of any other way for people to live. It continued in this way until my father started building a new house. However, he also had a large estate which needed to be run, so he summoned me and said, 'Son, I am too busy building this house to run this estate of mine, but it must be looked after. So go there and instruct the workers to do such-and-such and such-and-such. But do not dally over it for long or be detained, for if you are detained there your absence will distract me from being able to do anything.'

So I started out towards the estate. On the way, I passed by a Christian church and heard voices inside. I asked what was happening and they said that they were Christians praying. I went in to take a look and was much taken with what I saw. I remained seated there in their presence until the sun went down. My father sent people everywhere to search for me, until late in the evening I came back to him without having gone to the estate. My father said, 'Where were you? Did I not tell you to not let yourself be detained?'

I replied, 'Father, I passed by some people known as Christians, and their prayers and supplications pleased me so I sat down to observe how they did it.'

He said, 'Son, your religion and the religion of your forefathers is better than their religion.'

I said, 'No, by Allah, it is not better than their religion. These people worship Allah, pray to Him and supplicate to Him, whereas we worship naught but a fire that we ourselves kindle. If we were to let that fire alone it would go out.' He feared for me when he heard that, and so he shackled my legs in irons and imprisoned me in his house. I sent for the Christians and asked them, 'Where does this religion which I saw you practising originate?' They replied that it came from Syria.

I said, 'If any people come to you from there then let me know.' They said that they would do so. Then some of their traders returned to them from Syria and they sent for me to let me know they had come. I sent back asking them to let me know

when they had concluded their business and were preparing to leave. They said that they would.

When they had concluded their business and had packed their bags in preparation to leave, they sent to me to let me know. I threw off my shackles, caught up with them and travelled with them to Syria. When I arrived there I asked who the most learned and excellent person of their religion was. They directed me to the bishop of the main church. I went to him and told him that I would like to embrace his religion, stay with him in his church, worship Allah in his company, and learn the good religion from him. He invited me to come and be with him, but I discovered that he was an evil man. He used to order and encourage people to give alms, but then, when they brought it to him, he would put it in his own coffers and did not give it to the poor. This continued until he had collected seven large jars full of gold and silver. When I saw this, I came to hate him a great deal.

Sometime later he died, and when the Christians came forth to bury him, I told them that he was a bad man who had encouraged them to give *sadaqa*, and then taken the money and put it into his own coffers and not given it to the poor. They asked how I could possibly know this, so I told them I would bring the money out to them. Thereupon I brought out the seven jars overflowing with gold and silver. As soon as they saw that, they said, 'By Allah, we will never bury this fellow,' so they crucified him and stoned him. Then they appointed another person in his place and, by Allah, Ibn 'Abbas, I have never seen any non-Muslim more virtuous, diligent, ascetic in this world or more devoted to worship, day and night, than that man. I loved him as I had never before loved anyone. I remained with him until the time of his death grew imminent, whereupon I said to him, 'O so-and-so, as you can see, your time has come. Know that I have loved you like no other, so advise me and tell me who to go to.'

He answered me, 'My dear son, I know of no one to whom I can advise you to go, except a man in Mosul. Go to him. You will find his state to be similar to mine.' After he had died and been buried, I left for Mosul and went to the man who had been recommended to me. I found him to be like my previous mentor in dili-

gence and asceticism, so I said to him, 'So-and-so advised me to come and stay with you.' He said that I could stay with him.

I stayed with him and found him to be just like his predecessor. This continued until the moment of his death had almost arrived. Thereupon I said to him, 'So-and-so advised me to come to you, but the time of your death is at hand. To whom do you advise me to go now?'

He said, 'My dear son, I know of no one to whom I can advise you to go, except a man in Nusaybia. Go to him, for he follows the same way as us.' After they had buried him, I came to this other man and told him, 'O so-and-so, so-and-so advised me to go to so-and-so who advised me to come to you.' He permitted me to stay with him.

I lived with him in the same way that I had lived with my previous two mentors, then, when his death grew imminent, I said to him, 'O So-and-so, I have been advised by your predecessors until I came to you. Now the time of your death is at hand, so now to whom shall I go?'

He said to me, 'My dear son, I know of no one to whom I can advise you to go, except a man in 'Ammuriya in the lands of Byzantium. Go to him, for he is on the same path that we are.' After we had put his body into the earth, I went to the man he had recommended in 'Ammuriya, whom I found, indeed, to be a man of the same calibre.

I remained with him for some time and found work there. After a while, I had come to own some few sheep and cows. Then the time of his death drew near, so I said to him, 'So-and-so, your colleagues advised me, one after the other, until I came here to stay with you. Now the time of your death is at hand, so advise me as to my next mentor.'

He said to me, 'My son, by Allah, I do not know of a single person to whom I can advise you to go. But I can tell you that a Prophet is about to arise in the Haram in Makka. He will emigrate to a plain between two lava belts covered in palm trees. He will have unmistakable signs. The Seal of Prophethood will be between his shoulder blades, and he will eat what is given to him as a gift, but not what is given as *sadaqa*. If you are able to go to that land then go, for his coming is approaching.'

After we had buried him, I remained in 'Ammuriya until a group of Arab merchants from Kalb passed by. I asked them to take me with them to the land of the Arabs in exchange for my sheep and cows. They accepted the offer and took me with them. As soon as we reached Wadi'l-Qura, however, they acted treacherously towards me and sold me as a slave to one of the Jews of that place. By Allah, at the moment that I saw the palm-trees there, I hoped that I had come to the place that my mentor had described to me. I did not know for certain until a man of the Banu Qurayza from Madina came and bought me from the other man.

"He took me with him back to Madina and, by Allah, as soon as I set eyes on the place, I knew it from my mentor's description. I dwelt there in bondage with my master until Allah raised up His Messenger in Makka. No news of him reached me, however, for I was only a slave. Then the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, made *hijra* and alighted at Quba'. At that moment I was working in one of my master's palm-trees, while he stood below. While I was up the tree, a nephew of his came rushing up to him and said, 'May Allah smite the Banu Qayla (al-Aws and al-Khazraj)! At this very moment, they have gathered together at Quba', around a man who has just come from Makka. They claim him to be a Prophet!'

"As soon as I heard their conversation, I started shaking so much that I thought I might fall on top of my master. I climbed out of the tree and said, 'What is this news? What did you say?' My master raised his hand and slapped me hard on the cheek, then said, 'What is that to you? Get back to work!' I said, 'It is nothing. I just heard you say something and wanted to know what it was.'

"I had a small amount of food set aside, so that evening I gathered it together and went to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, while he was at Quba'. I said to him, 'I have heard that you are a righteous man and have come with companions who are strangers to these parts. I have some *sadaqa* to give and it seems to me that you have more right to it than anyone here, so take it and eat from it.' The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, refrained from eating but told his companions to eat. Thereupon I said to myself, 'That is one of the signs described to me by my mentor.' Then I went back.

"Then the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, moved to Madina. I collected some food together, then went to him a second time. I said to him, 'I noticed that you did not eat *sadaqa*. This food is a gift, not *sadaqa*.' The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, ate the food and so did his companions. I said to myself, 'That makes two signs.'

"Then I came to the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, while he was following a funeral procession in the midst of his companions. I had two cloaks with me, and when I saw him I went round behind him so that I might see the Seal (birthmark) between his shoulders. When the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, saw me looking at his back, he knew that I was trying to find out the truth of something that had been described to me, so he threw back his cloak allowing me to see, between his shoulders, the Seal that my mentor had described to me. As soon as I saw it, I lent over to kiss it and began to weep.

He said to me, 'Come here, Salman,' so I went to him and sat down in front of him. He wanted his companions to hear my story, so I related it to him, Ibn 'Abbas, as I now relate it to you. When I had completed my tale, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'Salman, make a *kitaba* agreement with your master that you will plant three hundred palm-trees for him and give him forty *uqiyyas* of gold in exchange for your freedom.'

The Companions of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, helped me with the palm-trees by giving me palm shoots: one man gave me thirty, one man twenty and so forth, every man giving as much as he was able, until I had all three hundred. Then the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, told me, 'Dig holes for the palm-trees. When you finish, let me know so that I can be the one who puts the saplings into the ground.'

I dug the holes with the help of his companions, then went to him and said, 'Messenger of Allah, we have finished digging.' He went out with me until we came to the spot where we had dug the holes. Then we brought him the palm shoots. He placed each one in the ground with his own hand and covered them over with

earth and, by the One Who sent him with the Truth, not a single one of the saplings died.

Thus I had fulfilled the part of my bargain concerning the palm-trees. However, the money still remained. Now a man had brought a golden nugget the size of a hen's egg from one of his mines and given it to the Messenger of Allah. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asked where I was and I was summoned to him. He said to me, 'Take this, Salman, and use it to pay off the part of your agreement that remains.' I said, 'How much of my debt will this cover, Messenger of Allah?' He said, 'Allah will pay your whole debt with it.'

I took it and weighed it and, by the One who holds Salman's soul in His Hand, it was more than heavy enough to pay off the forty *uqiyyas* and bring me freedom. My servitude had kept me from taking part in the Battles of Badr and Uhud, but I was freed in time to take part in the Battle of the Trench. After that I never missed another battle." (Ibn Ishaq)

An-Nadr ibn al-Harith told the Quraysh: "When Muhammad was a young man, you knew him to be the most liked amongst you, the most truthful in speech and the most trustworthy. As soon as you saw grey hairs upon his head, and he brought that which he brought, you said that he was a sorcerer – but, by Allah, he is not a sorcerer." (*ash-Shifa'*)

Al-Wahidi transmitted that Muqatil said: "Al-Harith ibn 'Amir ibn Nawfal ibn 'Abd Manaf used to reject Muhammad when he was in public and then, in the privacy of his home, would say to his family, 'Muhammad is not one of those who lie. I consider him to be one who speaks the truth.' Then, Allah sent down the verse '*We know that what they say distresses you. It is not that they are calling you a liar.*' (6:34)"

Anas ibn Malik said: "While we were sitting with the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in the mosque, a man came in on his camel. Then he made it kneel in the mosque, dismounted and tied it to a palm-tree. Then he said to us, 'Which one of you is Muhammad?' At that time, the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was reclining in our midst. We

replied, 'He is this white man who is reclining.' "The man asked him, "Are you the son of 'Abdu'l-Muttalib?"

The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'I have heard you.'

The man said, 'I want to ask you something and will require an answer, so do not become angry with me.'

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'Ask whatever you want.'

'I ask you by your Lord and the Lord of those before you, has Allah sent you to all peoples?'

The Prophet, peace be upon him, replied, 'Yes.'

He said, 'I ask you by Allah, has Allah commanded you to pray five prayers during the day and night?'

'Yes,' he replied.

The man said, 'I ask you by Allah, has Allah commanded you to fast this month of the year?'

'Yes,' he replied.

The man said, 'I ask you by Allah, has Allah commanded you to take *sadaqa* from the rich people amongst us and distribute it amongst the poor?'

'Yes,' replied the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

Thereupon the man said, 'I believe in what you have brought. I am an emissary of my people, who have come behind me. My name is Dimam ibn Tha'laba and I am the brother of Sa'd ibn Bakr.'"

Chapter 11

Situations and Events

Making the Call public

According to Ibn 'Abbas, may Allah be pleased with both him and his father: "When the verse '*Warn your near relatives*' (26:213) was revealed, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, ascended Safa and addressed the people saying, 'Tribe of Quraysh, come and listen to what I have to say.' The Quraysh said, 'Muhammad is speaking at Safa.' Thereupon they came to him and gathered round him, then asked, 'What is it, Muhammad?' He said, 'What would you think if I were to tell you that there was an army of cavalry at the foot of that mountain? Would you believe me?' They said, 'Yes, your word is beyond suspicion. We have never once heard you tell a lie.' He said, 'Banu 'Abdi'l-Muttalib, Banu 'Abd Manaf, Banu Zuhra, (and he mentioned other tribes of the Quraysh), I have come to warn you before the coming of a terrible punishment. Allah has commanded me to warn my near relatives. You have no special status or advantages in this world or the Next, unless you say 'There is no god but Allah.''" (*Tabaqat* of Ibn Sa'd)

According to Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him: "When Allah, the Mighty and Exalted, revealed the verse '*Warn your near relatives*' (26:213), the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, stood up and said, 'O tribe of Quraysh (or some words similar to this), redeem yourselves, for I cannot help you in any way against Allah. O Banu 'Abd Manaf, I cannot help you in any way against Allah. O 'Abbas ibn 'Abdi'l-Muttalib, I cannot help you in any way against Allah. O Safiyya, aunt of the Messenger of Allah, and Fatima bint Muhammad, ask me for whatever you want from my property, but I cannot help you in any way against Allah.'" (al-Bukhari)

The Call continues

The books of *Sira* mention Quraysh's visit to Abu Talib to ask him to forbid Muhammad to continue his call to Allah. When the Qurayshis came into his presence, they said to him, "O Abu Talib, your nephew has reviled our gods, denounced our religion, called our dreams foolish, and declared our forefathers to be misguided. Either stop him yourself or let us have our own way with him, for you are with us when it comes to opposing his religion. Will you spare us the trouble?" Abu Talib spoke kind words to them and sent them away courteously. They then left.

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, continued as before, openly proclaiming the *Deen* of Allah and calling people to Him. Then the situation worsened between him and the rest of the Quraysh, their hatred of him increased, and they started to speak badly of him in their circles and exhort one another against him.

Then they came to Abu Talib a second time and said, "Abu Talib, you are respected among us on account of your age, honour and rank. We have asked you to forbid your nephew to call people to Allah, but you did not do so. We can no longer keep patient while he curses our forefathers, calls our dreams foolish and denounces our religion. Either stop him for us, or we will move against both him and you, until one of you has been destroyed." Then they left him and went away. Abu Talib, however, even though he saw the division of his people and their enmity towards him as a terrible thing, was not prepared to surrender the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, or abandon him.

He then sent for the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and told him, "My nephew, your people came and said such-and-such and such-and-such to me; so spare me and yourself, and do not force me to do something that I could not bear."

At that point the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, suspected that his uncle had come to a decision about him and had decided to abandon him, and hand him over to them. He thought that his uncle had felt too weak to support him

or stand by his side, so he said, "Uncle, by Allah, if they were to place the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left in exchange for my giving up this matter, I would not do so."

Then the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, wept, stood up and turned away. Abu Talib called him back and said, "Come back, nephew." The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, turned back to him, and Abu Talib said to him, "O my nephew, go forth and say whatever you like, for by Allah I will never forsake you."

The Messenger (may Allah bless him and grant him peace) at Ta'if

After Abu Talib's death, the Quraysh ventured against the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and inflicted harm upon him, so he left Makka a few days before the end of Shawwal in the tenth year after the advent of prophethood, and went to Ta'if, accompanied by Zayd ibn Haritha. He spent ten days at Ta'if and approached every single noble there and spoke with them. He went to the three brothers who were the leaders of Thaqif, namely 'Abd Yalil ibn 'Amr ibn 'Umayr ibn 'Awf and his two brothers Mas'ud and Habib, sat down beside them, called them to Islam, and told them that he had come to them to seek their aid and ask them to stand with him against those of his people who had opposed him.

Thereupon one of them said, "If you have indeed been sent to us by Allah, then I will tear the cloth covering the Ka'ba." Then the second one said, "Could Allah not find anyone else to send apart from you?" And the third one said, "By Allah, I will never speak with you. If you are indeed, as you claim, a Messenger from Allah, then your great station means that I am unworthy to speak to you. If you are lying about Allah, then it is not proper for me to speak to you."

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, rose and left them, having despaired of the cream of Thaqif society. They then sent their fools and slaves against him to curse him and hurl insults in his direction. This continued until nearly all of the people had united against him and forced him to seek

refuge in an orchard that belonged to 'Utba ibn Rabi'a and Shayba ibn Rabi'a, who were both there at the time. When the mob saw him enter the orchard they turned around and went away.

The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, made for some grapevines and sat in the shade provided by them, all the while being watched by the two sons of Rabi'a, who had seen what the fools of Thaqif had done to him. When he had achieved some degree of tranquillity, he said, "O Allah, to You I complain of my weakness, my lack of resource, and my disgrace at the hands of these people. O Most Merciful of the merciful, You are the Lord of the weak and You are my Lord, so to whom will You entrust me? To one afar who shall frown upon me, or to an enemy You have given power over me? If You are not angry with me then I do not care, for Your good will is more important to me. I take refuge in the Light of Your Face, by which You have lit up the darkness and caused the affairs of this world and the Next to be conducted in a correct manner, from Your anger or wrath descending upon me. It is for You to grant favour when you are pleased to do so. There is no power and no strength except by You." (Ibn Hisham)

When the two brothers, 'Utba and Shayba, saw what had happened to him, they sent for a Christian slave of theirs to call 'Addas and told him to take some grapes, put them on a platter and take them to him so that he could eat. He did as they had asked and approached the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and placed the grapes down in front of him. When the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, moved his hand to take a grape, he said, "*Bismillah* ('In the Name of Allah')," then ate. 'Addas looked upon his face, then said, "By Allah, the people of this land do not say things like that."

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said to him, "What country do you come from? What is your religion?" He replied, "I am a Christian of the people of Nineveh."

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Do you come from the town of the righteous man, Yunus ibn Matta?" He replied, "How do you know of him?"

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "He is my brother, for he was a Prophet and I am a Prophet." Thereupon 'Addas bent

over the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and kissed his head, hands and feet. When the sons of Rabi'a saw that, one of them said to the other, "He has already corrupted your slave!"

When 'Addas returned to them, they said to him, "Woe to you, 'Addas! What made you kiss the head, hands and feet of that man?" He replied, "Master, there is no one in all these lands better than that man sitting there. He told me of something that only a Prophet could know about." (Ibn Ishaq)

The most courageous of people

Anas, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was the best of people and the most courageous. One night people were startled and terrified by an ominous sound. They went out in the direction of the sound and found that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had preceded them and had already ascertained that the sound was harmless. He was riding one of the horses of Abu Talha bareback with a sword strapped to his back saying, "Do not be alarmed! Do not be alarmed!" We found the horse to be a sea (i.e. it was very fast)." (al-Bukhari)

Fatima (may Allah be pleased with her)

According to 'Ali: "Fatima (may Allah be pleased with him and with her) was complaining about how hard grinding wheat was for her. She heard that the Messenger of Allah had arrived with some prisoners of war, so she went to him to ask him for a servant. She did not find him home, however, so she mentioned the matter to 'A'isha. When the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, came back, 'A'isha mentioned the matter to him. Thereupon he came to see us. We had already gone to bed, so we prepared to get up. He told us to remain where we were, and I felt the cold of his feet upon my chest. Then he said, 'Should I not tell you of something which is better for you than that which you had asked for? When you go to bed, say "*Allahu Akbar* ('Allah is Greatest')" thirty-four times, "*Al-Hamdu li-llah* ('Praise belongs to

Allah’)" thirty-three times, and "*Subhan Allah* ('Glory be to Allah')" thirty-three times. That is much better for you both than that which you asked for." (al-Bukhari)

The Digging of the Trench

Anas, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "The Muhajirun and the Ansar began to dig a trench around Madina. They would carry the earth on their backs and chant: 'We are the ones who pledged allegiance to Muhammad, on the basis that we would fight *jihad* together with him as long as we lived.' The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, would respond to them by saying 'O Allah, there is no good except the good of the Hereafter, so bless the Emigrants and the Ansar.'" (al-Bukhari)

Al-Bara', may Allah be pleased with him, said: "I saw the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, carrying earth on the day of the Battle of the Confederates. He worked so hard that earth hid the whiteness of his stomach. He said, Allah, if it were not for You, we would not have been guided, or given alms or prayed. So send Your tranquillity upon us and strengthen us for the time when we meet You. The regiments treat us unjustly, but if they want to make us leave the *Deen* we refuse." (al-Bukhari)

Allah the Protector

Jabir ibn 'Abdullah, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated: "Once we went out with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, on a raid in the direction of the Najd. When the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, returned from the raid we went with him. The time for siesta came upon us while we were in a valley full of thorny bushes. The Companions of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, stopped to rest under a tree, and the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, stopped beside an acacia tree, upon which he hung his sword.

We all fell asleep and then we heard the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, calling us. We went to

him and saw a desert Arab sitting beside him. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, then said, 'This man took my sword from its sheath while I was asleep. I awoke to find him standing over me with my unsheathed sword in his hand. He asked me, "Who will protect you from me?" I replied that Allah would, and he sat down.' The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, did not punish the man." (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Ibn Maz'un prefers the protection of Allah

When 'Uthman ibn Maz'un saw the difference between the plight in which other Muslims found themselves and the fact that he was free to come and go as he pleased under the protection of al-Walid ibn al-Mughira, he said to himself, "It is a sign of a great shortcoming in me for me to be free to come and go as I please under the protection of an idolater, while my companions and co-religionists undergo hardships that I do not." He therefore went to al-Walid ibn al-Mughira and told him, "Abu 'Abd Shams, your responsibility has been fulfilled. I have released you of your obligation to protect me." He asked, "But why, nephew? Has one of my family caused you harm?"

'Uthman replied, "No, but I am content with Allah's protection and I do not want to seek refuge in anyone other than Him."

Al-Walid replied, "Then go to the mosque and renounce my protection of you in public, for I gave it to you in public."

They both went out to the mosque, and when they got there al-Walid announced, "This is 'Uthman. He has renounced his right to my protection."

'Uthman said, "He has spoken the truth. I have found him to be faithful and honourable, but I would not like to take refuge in anyone except Allah, so I have released him of his obligation to protect me." Then 'Uthman went away.

Labid ibn Rabi'a ibn Malik ibn Ja'far ibn Kilab was sitting amongst a group of Quraysh and reciting his poetry to them. 'Uthman sat down and joined them. Labid said: "Truly, everything except Allah is vanity."

'Uthman said, "You have spoken the truth."

Thereupon Labid continued: "And every pleasure will undoubtedly fade away."

'Uthman cried out, "You have lied, for the pleasures of the Garden will never fade."

Labid said, "O tribe of Quraysh, your guests never used to be insulted in this way! Since when has this started to happen amongst you?"

One of the men present said, "This is one of those fools who are with him. They have forsaken our religion, so do not be affected by what he has to say." 'Uthman responded in kind, and the situation very quickly became serious. Then that man stood up to 'Uthman and punched him in the eye so that it became black. Al-Walid ibn al-Mughira was sitting nearby and saw what happened. He said, "By Allah, nephew, your eye need not have suffered thus, for you were under the protection of a strong group of people."

'Uthman replied, "Not so, by Allah! My good eye needs the same treatment that befell its sister in the Way of Allah. I am under the protection of One Who is stronger and mightier than you, Abu 'Abd Shams."

Al-Walid said to him, "Come, nephew, you may have my protection once again if you desire it." 'Uthman replied that he did not want it. (Ibn Ishaq)

Abu Bakr and Ibn ad-Dughunna

Ibn ad-Dughunna met Abu Bakr on a road outside Makka and asked him, "Where are you going, Abu Bakr?"

Abu Bakr replied, "My people have thrown me out, caused me injury and made things hard for me."

He said, "But why? For, by Allah, you are the ornament of the tribe, help people when they are overcome by misfortune, and give to the poor. Go back. You shall have my protection."

So Abu Bakr went back with him. As soon as they had entered Makka, Ibn Ad-Dughunna stood up and said, "People of Quraysh, I have placed the son of Abu Quhafa under my protection, so do not subject him to anything except good." After that they left him alone.

Abu Bakr used to have a place where he would pray by the door of his house in the district of Banu Jumah. He was a soft-hearted man and was often brought to tears by the Qur'an when he recited it. While he was in prayer, young boys, slaves and others passing by would be very moved by what they saw of his appearance. Thereupon, some men from the Quraysh went to Ibn ad-Dughunna and said to him, "Ibn ad-Dughunna, you surely did not give protection to this man so that he might cause us harm. He is a man who, when he prays or reads what Muhammad brought, becomes soft and starts to weep. He has such a striking appearance when he is in that state that we fear he may attract our women, the young and the weak among us towards his religion. So please go to him and command him to go indoors. He may do whatever he wants inside."

Ibn ad-Dughunna went to him and told him, "Abu Bakr, I did not give you protection so that you could cause harm to your people. They dislike the place that you pray in and feel harmed by your praying there, so please go inside. You may do what you will in there."

Abu Bakr asked, "Shall I release you from your obligation of protecting me and be satisfied with the protection of Allah?" Ibn ad-Dughunna said that he should, and Abu Bakr renounced his protection. Then the son of ad-Dughunna stood up amongst the people of the Quraysh and said, "Tribe of Quraysh, Ibn Abi Quhafa has renounced my protection; so you may deal with him as you will." (Ibn Ishaq)

'Abd ar-Rahman ibn al-Qasim told me that his father al-Qasim ibn Muhammad said: "A foolish, irresponsible man from the Quraysh met Abu Bakr as he was making for the Ka'ba and threw earth in his face. At that moment, al-Walid ibn al-Mughira (or al-'As ibn Wa'il) passed by Abu Bakr in the street. Abu Bakr said to him, 'Have you seen what this foolish person has done to me?' Al-Walid said, 'It is you who have done it to yourself,' while Abu Bakr said, 'O Lord, how Forbearing you are!' He said it three times." (Ibn Ishaq)

10. Bilal (may Allah be pleased with him)

Have you heard the story of Umayya ibn Khalaf, when he learnt that his slave Bilal had entered Islam? He was not concerned about anything other than afflicting upon him all manner of tortures and punishments. He used to tie a rope of coarse palm fibres around Bilal's neck and then hand him over to a group of young men whose hearts were completely devoid of compassion. They would take him and drag him around by the throat as if he were an animal: they would drag him on his front and back, from side to side, so hard that the cords dug into his neck and broke the skin, causing blood to flow from the wound.

Bilal, despite all of this, seemed to be completely unmoved, so the only recourse left open to Umayya was to starve him of food and water. Therefore, Umayya began to bring him out in the hottest part of the day, throw him on his back in the plain of Makka, and order a great rock to be placed upon his chest. The sun made the sand around him and under him so hot that it was as if he were lying on hot coals. While he was lying there, Umayya would say to him, "You will remain like this until you either die, or reject Muhammad and return to the worship of al-Lat and al-'Uzza."

In response to all of this, Bilal would merely raise his index finger to the sky and repeatedly say, "One, One." By that, he was demonstrating his contempt for his master who had had the nerve to associate partners, made of wood and stone, with Allah. His affirming of the Unity of Allah helped him to believe that he was a martyr for his faith, and created a feeling of inconceivable sweetness in his soul, making him forget his pain.

Waraqah ibn Nawfal passed by him while he was being tortured in this way, and heard him say "One, One" without stopping even for a moment. Waraqah said to him, "One, One, by Allah, O Bilal." Then he turned to face Umayya ibn Khalaf and those of the Banu Jumah who had abetted him, and said, "I swear by Allah that if you kill him in this way I will turn his tomb into a shrine."

It was destined that Abu Bakr one day passed by the sun-scorched earth upon which Bilal was being tortured and witnessed this ugly thing that was happening to him. He said with disgust,

“Have you no fear of the punishment of Allah, Umayya, for the kinds of torture you have inflicted on this poor soul?” He responded to him with a cry, “You are the one who corrupted him, so save him with what you see fit.”

Abu Bakr said, “I have a black slave who is stronger than him and has more stamina. He follows your religion. I will give him to you for him.

Umayya replied, “I accept your offer. He is yours.”

Abu Bakr gave him that slave of his, took Bilal in exchange, and gave him his freedom. (From *Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah*.)

The First Companion to recite the Qur'an aloud

Yahya ibn 'Urwa ibn az-Zubayr related that his father said: “The first person to recite the Qur'an aloud in Makka after the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, may Allah be pleased with him. One day, the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, gathered together and said, ‘By Allah, the Quraysh have never heard this Qur'an recited aloud. Who will volunteer to recite it to them?’ ‘Abdullah ibn Mas'ud replied that he would be the one to do so.

They said, ‘We are afraid of what they might do to you. We really need a man who has a tribe that will guarantee him protection from people.’

He replied, ‘Take me, for Allah will be my Protector.’ In the morning Ibn Mas'ud set out. He arrived at the *Maqam* of Ibrahim at mid-morning whilst the Quraysh were sitting around in their circles. He stood upon the *Maqam* and said, ‘In the Name of Allah, All-Merciful, Most Merciful,’ raising his voice as he said it. Then he recited the *sura* ‘*The All-Merciful taught the Qur'an*’ (55), turning to face them as he recited it, so that they might see him.

They started to say to each other, ‘What is this son of the mother of a slave saying?’ Some of them said, ‘He is reciting some of what Muhammad has brought. They then came towards him and started to beat him round the face; but he continued to recite as much as Allah willed him to recite, and then returned to his companions. The Quraysh had left him with marks and bruises

upon his face, so his companions said to him, 'That is what we feared might happen to you.'

He replied, 'At this moment, there is not one of Allah's enemies who is of less import to me than them. If you want, I will repeat my recitation to them tomorrow morning.'

They replied, 'No, you have done enough. You have made them hear what they hate to hear.'" (Ibn Ishaq)

'Amr ibn 'Abasa becomes Muslim

'Amr ibn 'Abasa said, "I came to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, at the start of his Mission, while he was still in Makka, and keeping his Islam quiet. I asked him, 'What are you?' He said that he was a Prophet, so I asked, 'What is a Prophet?' He replied that a Prophet was a Messenger of Allah. I said, 'Has Allah sent you, then?' He said, 'Yes!'; and so I asked, 'What is the message He has sent you to convey?' He replied, 'That we should worship Allah, destroy the idols and maintain ties of kinship.'

I said, 'How excellent it is, what you have been sent with! Who has followed you in taking this on?' He replied, 'A free man and a slave,' meaning Abu Bakr and Bilal. ('Amr used to say that he was the fourth person to become Muslim). Thereupon, I became Muslim and said, 'Shall I follow you and remain with you, Messenger of Allah?' He said, 'No; go back to your people. When you hear that I am preaching openly, then come and follow me.'" (Related by Muslim and others)

Khalid ibn Sa'id becomes Muslim

Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn 'Uthman said: "Khalid ibn Sa'id ibn al-'As became Muslim a long time ago (at the beginning of Islam) and he was the first of his brothers to enter the *Deen*. He came to Islam in the following way. One day he had a dream in which he was standing on the edge of the Fire, and saw his father trying to push him into it, while the Messenger of Allah grabbed hold of his waist and prevented him from falling. He then

awoke from his sleep in a state of fear and said to himself, 'I swear by Allah that this is a true vision.'

He went out and encountered Abu Bakr ibn Quhafa, may Allah be pleased with him. He mentioned his dream to him and Abu Bakr said, 'Allah desires good for you. This is the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, so follow him. Indeed you will follow him and enter into Islam. In your dream, he is taking hold of your belt to make you enter into Islam, while your father is taking hold of your belt to throw you into the Fire.'

He encountered the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, while he was in Ayyad and asked him, 'Muhammad, what is it you call people to do?' He replied, 'I call you to testify that Allah is One without partner and that Muhammad is His Slave and Messenger, and to renounce the worship of stones which cannot see or hear, harm you or benefit you, or know those that worship them from those that do not.'

Khalid said, 'I bear witness that there is no god but Allah, and I bear witness that you are the Messenger of Allah.' The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, rejoiced in his accepting Islam. Then Khalid went into hiding. His father came to know of his having accepted Islam and sent out search parties with instructions to bring him back. When he was brought back to him, he reproached him and kept on hitting him with a cudgel until he had broken it upon his head. Then he said, 'Allah, I will deny you provision and give you nothing to live on.' Khalid replied, 'Even if you do that, Allah will provide enough for my needs.' Then he went to the Messenger of Allah, and became inseparable from him." (*Dala'il an-nubuwwa*)

Hamza ibn 'Abdi'l-Muttalib

Muhammad ibn Ishaq related that a man of Aslam – a man who openly called people to Islam – told him that Abu Jahl happened on the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, while he was at Safa and began to curse, harm and insult him in whatever way he could in order to bring his *deen* into disrepute. Hamza ibn 'Abdi'l-Muttalib was told about this, so he took his bow and went to Abu Jahl and stood over him. He lifted up his

bow and struck Abu Jahl a violent blow which laid open his skull. The men of the Banu Makhzum stood up against Hamza in order to help Abu Jahl and said to him, "It seems, Hamza, that you have apostatised." Hamza said, "And what could prevent me from doing so after what I have seen from him? I bear witness that he is the Messenger of Allah, and that what he says is the truth. By Allah, I will not desist, so stop me if you can." Abu Jahl said, "Let Abu 'Umara be – for, by Allah, I did revile his nephew most severely."

When Hamza became Muslim, the Quraysh knew that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had become more powerful and had acquired in Hamza someone to protect him, so they stopped doing to him some of the things they had become accustomed to doing. Hamza himself wrote some poetry about it.

According to Ibn Ishaq: "Then Hamza went back to his house and Shaytan came to him. He said, 'You are the lord of the Quraysh and yet you have followed that apostate and left the religion of your forefathers! It would have been better for you to die than to do what you have done.' He came close to Hamza, spreading the seeds of doubt. Hamza said, 'What have I done? O Allah, if I have acted rightly then put in my heart a strong belief in him. If I have not, then make me one of those to whom You grant a way out.'

Hamza passed a night unlike any other he had ever known, with Shaytan whispering to him every moment. Then, when morning arrived, he went to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and said, 'My dear nephew, I have fallen down a hole from which I can find no way out and have taken on something I know nothing about – is it right guidance or total misguidance? So tell me something (of this matter), for I feel the need for you to speak to me.'

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, approached him and reminded and admonished him, then gave him the good news of Islam. Thereupon Allah made his heart believe in what the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had said.

Hamza said, 'I bear witness that you speak the truth, so tell me about your *deen*, nephew. For, by Allah, I do not want the sky to

cloud over, or another moment of the day to pass, and find me still following my previous religion."

Hamza, may Allah be pleased with him, was the one by whom Allah made his *Deen* strong. (*Dala'il an-nubuwwa* of al-Bayhaqi)

The *Hijra* of Suhayb

Suhayb, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'I saw the abode to which you will emigrate: it is a plain between two lava belts. It is either Hijr or Yathrib.'

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, left and went to Madina, and Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, went with him. I had intended to go with him, but some young men from the Quraysh prevented me from doing so and forced me to remain standing that whole night without letting me sit down. They said, 'Allah has distracted him from you with his stomach,' but I did not complain. Then they fell asleep. I left, but some of them caught up with me after I had travelled about twelve miles or so and wanted to take me back.

I said to them, 'What would you say if I were to give you some *uqiyyas* of gold in return for you permitting me to go on my way and place me in the trust of Allah?' They agreed to the bargain, so I led them back to Makka and said, 'Dig under the threshold of the door and you will find the *uqiyyas* of gold. Then go to Lady So-and-so and take the jewellery from her.'

Then I went forth toward Madina and caught up with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, while he was still at Quba'. When he saw me he said, 'O Abu Yahya, you have made a profitable transaction.' He said it three times. Then I said, 'Messenger of Allah, no one preceded me to you and no one can have informed you of that except Jibril, peace be upon him.' (*Dala'il an-nubuwwa*)

The *Hijra* of 'Umar, and the story of 'Ayyash with him

'Umar ibn al-Khattab and 'Ayyash ibn Abi Rabi'a al-Makhzumi went to Madina. Nafi', the freedman of 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar,

related from 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar that his father had said: "When we had decided to emigrate, I made an appointment to meet 'Ayyash ibn Abi Rabi'a and Hisham ibn al-'As ibn Wa'il as-Sahmi by the thorn-trees at Adat Bani Ghifar, somewhere above Sarif. We agreed that, if any of us failed to turn up there in the morning, the others would assume that he had been forcibly detained and would continue on.

'Ayyash and I duly met by the thorn-trees the next morning, but Hisham was held back and tortured until he apostatised. When we reached Madina, we stayed with the Banu 'Amr ibn 'Awf at Quba'. Then Abu Jahl ibn Hisham and al-Harith ibn Hisham went out from Makka to find 'Ayyash ibn Abi Rabi'a, who was their cousin and maternal brother. They came upon us while we were in Madina and the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was still in Makka. They told 'Ayyash that his mother had sworn that no comb would touch her head, nor would she take shelter from the sun, until she had set eyes upon him again. His heart softened towards her when he heard that, so I said to him, "Ayyash, by Allah, this is only an attempt by your people to get you somewhere where they can entice you to leave your *deen*, so beware of them. For, by Allah, if your mother were to become afflicted by lice she would use a comb, and if the heat of Makka became too much for her, she would seek the shade.

He said, 'I will help my mother fulfil her oath and, at the same time, I will collect some of the money that I left there.' I said to him, 'By Allah, you know me to be one if the richest men of the Quraysh. I will give you half of my wealth, if you do not go with them.'

He refused my offer, however, and was determined to go with them. When I saw that he was in earnest, I said to him, 'If that is what you have to do, then take this camel of mine: she is a noble camel and is well-trained. Remain mounted, and if you begin to suspect a trick from your people then make good your escape on her.'

He took her and left with them. After they had gone some small distance, Abu Jahl said to him, 'Nephew, by Allah I find this camel of mine unruly and hard to ride. Will you not permit me to sit behind you on that camel of yours?' He agreed and, made his

camel kneel. Then they made their camels kneel also so that they could change over. When they were all on level ground, they leapt upon him, tied him up and brought him back to Makka. Then they tortured him and induced him to apostatise." (Ibn Ishaq)

Ibn Ishaq said, "One of the family of 'Ayyash ibn Abi Rabi'a told me that they brought him, tied and bound, into Makka in the daytime, and then said, "People of Makka, you should deal with your fools as we have dealt with this fool of ours." (Ibn Ishaq)

Al-Walid ibn al-Walid, 'Ayyash and Hisham

Ibn Hisham related that someone he trusted had informed him that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said while he was in Madina, "Who will bring me back 'Ayyash ibn Abi Rabi'a and Hisham ibn al-'As?" Al-Walid ibn al-Walid ibn al-Mughira said, "I will bring them back for you, Messenger of Allah." Thereupon he went out to Makka and entered the city secretly. Having entered, he met a woman carrying some food. He asked her, "Where are you going, slave of Allah?"

She answered, "I am going to two people who have been locked up in order to help them." He followed her to find out where they were being held, and discovered that they were being kept in a house without a roof. When evening arrived, he clambered over the wall, took out a slab of flint and put it under their feet so that their bonds rested upon it. Then he struck downwards with his sword and cut their bonds, so freeing them. After that his sword became known as 'the Master of Flint'. Then he carried them to his camel, put them on it and led them away. At that point, he lost his footing and cut his finger and so he said: "You are nothing except a finger that has bled, and encountered what it has in the Way of Allah."

Then he brought them to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace (*Rawd al-unuf*). During that time, the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had made supplication for them during the prayer and would say, "O Allah, save al-Walid ibn al-Walid, Salama ibn Hisham, 'Ayyash ibn Abi Rabi'a, and all of the believers who are weak."

The family of Yasir

Hisham ibn Abi 'Abdullah related that Khalid said: "The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, passed by 'Ammar and his family while they were being tortured. He said to them, 'Rejoice, family of 'Ammar and family of Yasir, for your appointed place is in the Garden.'"

Sufyan related from Mansur that Mujahid said, "The first martyr in the history of Islam was Sumayya, the mother of 'Ammar. Abu Jahl stabbed her in the heart with a spear."

Zinnira

Hisham ibn 'Urwa related from his father that Abu Bakr once freed seven people who were being tortured on account of their Islam. Zinnira was one of these seven. She was one of those who was being tortured to make her renounce Islam, but she refused to do so. She lost her sight, so the idolaters started to say to her, "It is none other than al-Lat and al-'Uzza who have made you lose your sight." She replied, "No, by Allah! It is not as you say." Thereupon Allah returned her sight to her."

An-Nadr ibn Al-Harith

'Ikrima related that Ibn 'Abbas narrated: "An-Nadr ibn al-Harith stood up and said, 'Tribe of Quraysh, by Allah, you have are being tested by something the like of which you have never been tested with before. When Muhammad was a young man, you knew him to be the best liked amongst you, the most truthful in speech and the most trustworthy. As soon as you saw grey hairs upon his head, and he brought that which he brought, you said that he was a sorcerer; but by Allah he is not a sorcerer, for they spit, blow and tie knots and he does none of those things. You said he was a soothsayer; but by Allah he is not that either, for soothsayers have their states and speak in *saja'* (rhyming prose) and he does not. You said he was a poet; but by Allah he is not, for his words do not follow any of the recognised patterns of poetry: it is not *hajaz* or *qarid* or any other form. You said he was possessed by

jinn; but he is not mad or possessed, for he has never been afflicted by any bouts of choking or whispering, or suffered any bouts of delirium. Tribe of Quraysh, look at your own affairs, for by Allah a terrible thing has befallen you.' An-Nadr was one of the *shaytans* of the Quraysh, and was one of those who inflicted harm upon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and used to revile him. (*Dala'il an-nubuwwa*)

People listen to the Qur'an in secret

Az-Zuhri recounted that he was told that Abu Jahl, Abu Sufyan and al-Akhnas ibn Shariq all went out one night to listen to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, while he was in his house, standing the night in prayer. Each of them chose a place to sit in order to listen, but none of them knew the others were there as they had all come separately. They spent the whole night listening to him and then, when dawn broke, departed. On the way home they met and started to reproach one another for listening to him. They said to each other, "Do not go back, for if some of the weak-minded fools see you here it will put ideas into their minds." Then they parted company.

The following night, each one of them returned to his sitting place of the previous night in order to listen once again. Again, at daybreak, they departed, met on the road and said to each other the same thing they had said the previous night.

Again, on the third night, they returned to spend the night in their hiding places beside the Prophet's house. At dawn, they left and met upon the road. They said to one another, "We will not stop coming until we make a pact that we will not." They made their pact and each went his own way.

That morning, al-Akhnas ibn Shariq took up his stick and then went out to the house of Abu Sufyan and said to him, "Tell me, Abu Hanzala, what is your opinion about what you heard from Muhammad?"

He replied, "By Allah, Abu Tha'laba, I heard things that I knew and knew what was meant by them, and I heard things that I did not know and did not know what was meant by them." Al-Akhnas responded, "By the One Whom I swear by, I too felt the same."

Then al-Akhnas left him, went to Abu Jahl and entered in upon him. He said, "What did you hear?"

Abu Jahl replied, "We have vied with the Banu 'Abd Manaf for honour for a long time. They have fed people and so have we; they have taken on other's burdens and so have we; and they have given to the poor and so have we. We have remained neck and neck, like two horses of equal speed straining for the finishing line. Now they say they have a Prophet who receives revelations from heaven. When will we achieve anything like that? By Allah, we will never believe in him or affirm that he has brought the truth." Al-Akhnas ibn Shariq then left him and went on his way." (Ibn Ishaq)

Allah will perfect His *Deen*

Bayan ibn Bishr and Isma'il ibn Abi Khalid related that they heard Qays recount that he heard Khabbab say, "I came to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, while he was lying down in the shade of the Ka'ba using his cloak as a pillow, after we had undergone a very difficult time at the hands of the idolaters. I said to him, "Messenger of Allah, can you not ask Allah on our behalf to aid us against the unbelievers?"

He sat up, covering his face, and said, "Those who came before you used to be tortured with iron-toothed combs which would cut through flesh and sinew right to the bone, but that would not cause them to leave their *deen*. Their torturers used to cut their heads in two, but they did not forsake their *deen*. Allah will perfect His *Deen* and strengthen it to such an extent that when a person travels from San'a to Hadramawt, he will have no cause to fear anything except Allah, Exalted is He, and wolves attacking his sheep."

The *Hijra* of Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr

As-Suhayli said in regard to the *hijra* of Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr: "He was a Qur'an reciter and was the first to be known by that appellation (*muqri'*). His *kunya* was Abu 'Abdullah. Before becoming Muslim, he had one of the most blessed and comfortable

lifestyles of anyone within the Quraysh and was greatly loved by his mother. He used to sleep with a wooden bowl filled with a date and yoghurt mash beside his head, and when he woke up he would eat it. After he became Muslim, the great hardship that he suffered caused his colour to change and his flesh to melt away. He became so thin and gaunt that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, would weep when he saw him.

When he became Muslim and made *hijra*, his mother made an oath that she would not eat, drink or seek shelter from the sun until he returned to her. She would stay out in the sun until she fainted dead away. Then her children would be forced to fill her mouth with twigs and pour in small quantities of water to stop her from dying.

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to say about him, 'In Makka, I did not see anyone with more beautiful hair, finer clothes or greater blessings than Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr.' This was transmitted by al-Waqidi. He also mentioned that in his youth Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr was a very handsome and brilliant young man whose parents loved him very much. His mother used to dress him in the finest clothes and give him the finest perfumes, so that he became the best-smelling person of the Quraysh. He would also wear *Hadrami* sandals. When he was in Madina, he used to stay in the home of As'ad ibn Zurara." (*ar-Rawd al-unuf*)

'Ubaydullah ibn 'Abdullah related that Ibn 'Abbas said: "The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, announced the obligation to perform the *Jumu'a* before he made *hijra*, but he was unable to perform it whilst in Makka and could see no means of doing so there; so he wrote to Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr in Madina, saying, "When the sun passes its zenith on the day of *Jumu'a*, gain access to Allah's favour by performing two *rak'ats*." Therefore, the first person to perform the *Jumu'a* was Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr and he continued to lead the *Jumu'a* until the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, came to Madina. He would gather the people at the time of *Dhuh*r on Friday, doing so openly." (*ar-Rawd al-unuf*)

How Sa'd ibn Mu'adh and Usayd ibn Hudayr embraced Islam

'Ubaydullah ibn al-Mughira ibn Mu'ayqib and 'Abdullah ibn Abi Bakr ibn Muhammad ibn 'Amr ibn Hazim told me that Sa'd ibn Zurara went out with Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr, making for the abodes of the Banu'l-Ashhal and the Banu Zafar. Sa'd ibn Mu'adh ibn an-Nu'man ibn Imri'l-Qays ibn Zayd ibn al-Ashhal ibn Khalid was the son of one of As'ad's aunts. As'ad took Mus'ab into one of the orchards of the Banu Zafar, and went to sit with him beside a well called the Well of Maraqq. A number of the men who had by then accepted Islam were gathered there.

Sa'd ibn Mu'adh and Usayd ibn Hudayr were at the time the leaders of their respective clans within the Banu'l-Ashhal and were both still idolaters, following the religion of their forefathers. When they heard about As'ad, Sa'd ibn Mu'adh asked Usayd ibn 'Umayr, "Do you have no father? Go to these two men who have come to our abodes to make fools of the weak-minded amongst us, and drive them out. Forbid them to come to our lands again. If it were not for the fact that As'ad ibn Zurara is related to me in the way that you know, I would do it myself, but he is my aunt's son and so I may not stand against him."

Usayd ibn Hudayr took hold of his spear and went towards them. When As'ad ibn Zurara saw him, he told Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr, "This is the chief of his clan, so speak the truth about Allah to him." Mus'ab said, "If he sits down, I will speak to him." He stood over them scowling and said, "What has brought the two of you to us? Will you make fools of the weak-minded amongst us? Go now, if you have any use for your lives!"

Mus'ab said to him, "Will you not sit and listen to what we have to say? If you are pleased by what you hear then you can accept it, and if you dislike it, you are free to leave it."

He replied that he considered that to be fair, so he stuck his spear in the ground and sat down beside them. Mus'ab then spoke to him about Islam and recited some of the Qur'an to him. Recalling the incident in hindsight they said, "Before he said anything, we could see by the radiance in his face that he accepted Islam."

Usayd said, "How excellent and fine these words are! What does one do if he wants to enter into this *deen*?"

They replied, "You must perform an ablution and clean yourself and your clothes thoroughly. Then you must bear witness to the truth and perform the prayer."

He immediately got up, went and performed an ablution, purified his clothes, bore witness to the truth and performed two *rak'ats*. Then he said, "There is a man behind me. If he follows, every one of his family will follow suit. I will send him to you immediately. He is Sa'd ibn Mu'adh."

Then he took up his spear and went back to Sa'd and his people, who were sitting down in an assembly. When Sa'd ibn Mu'adh saw him approaching them, he said, "I swear by Allah, Usayd is coming back to you with a different face from the one he had when he left you."

When he sat down in the assembly beside them, Sa'd asked him what had happened. 'Umayr said, "I spoke to the two men and, by Allah, I saw no harm in them. I forbade them to continue and they responded that they would do as I liked. Thereupon I was told that the Banu Haritha had gone out against As'ad ibn Zurara to kill him because they knew him to be the son of your aunt and wanted to make you appear treacherous towards him."

In his rage, Sa'd leapt to his feet. He was alarmed at what had been said about the Banu Haritha, so he took hold of his sword and said, "By Allah, it seems to me that you have done nothing effective." Then he went towards As'ad and Mus'ab. When he saw them sitting there in a state of calm and tranquillity, he knew that Usayd had only intended for him to listen to them. He stood over them with a furious expression on his face and told As'ad, "O Abu Umama, if it were not for the kinship between us, you could not have bluffed me in this way. Do you want to visit upon our two houses something that we do not like?"

Before he had come, As'ad told Mus'ab, "A leader has come to you whose people are totally behind him. If he follows you, then not even two of his people will remain who have not accepted the *Deen*."

Mus'ab asked Sa'd, "Will you not sit down and hear what we have to say? If you like what we have to say, then you can accept it,

but if you do not like it then we will go away." He replied that he considered that to be fair, so he stuck his spear in the ground and sat down beside them. Thereupon Mus'ab told him about Islam and recited some of the Qur'an to him. Recalling the incident in hindsight they said, "Before he said anything, we could see by the radiance in his face that he had accepted Islam."

Sa'd asked, "How does one become Muslim and enter into your *deen*?" They replied that he should purify himself by performing an ablution, purify his clothes, bear witness to the truth and then pray two *rak'ats*. He got up and did as they said, then he took up his spear and returned to the assembly where his people were sitting, accompanied by Usayd.

When his people saw him coming, they said, "We swear by Allah, Sa'd is coming back to us with a different face from the one he had when he left us." When he reached them, he said, "O Banu 'Abdi'l-Ashhal, what is my status amongst you?"

They replied, "You are our chief. You have the best judgement amongst us and are the most fortunate in leadership."

He said, "It is unlawful for any of you, man or woman, to speak with me until he has first believed in Allah and His Messenger." And, by Allah, not a single evening passed before every man and woman of the Banu'l-Ashhal had become Muslim. Then As'ad and Mus'ab returned to the house of As'ad ibn Zurara and remained there calling people to Islam." (*ar-Rawd al-unuf*)

'Amr ibn al-'As becomes Muslim

'Amr ibn al-'As, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "When the Battle of the Trench had ended, and we had made our retreat with our confederates, I gathered together some of the men of the Quraysh who had respect for me and might listen to what I had to say. I said to them, 'By Allah, you know that this religion of Muhammad's will grow and grow until it becomes greater than anything else. I have had an idea and I would like to know what you think of it.'

They asked, 'What is your idea?'

He said, 'I think that we should go and stay with the Negus. Then if Muhammad defeats our people we shall be with the

Negus and it is preferable for us to be under his authority rather than Muhammad's. If our people win, however, then they know us well and will give us good treatment.' They thought my suggestion to be excellent. I then told them, 'Gather some things that we can give to him as presents.' The thing that the Negus loved best from our land was leather, so we hoarded together lots of examples of leatherwork and left for his country, carrying them with us.

When we arrived, who should come, at that very moment, but 'Amr ibn Umayya ad-Damri. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had sent him to find out about Ja'far and his Companions. He entered the presence of the Negus and then went out. I told my companions, 'This is 'Amr ibn Umayya. If I were to go to the Negus and ask him to do so, he would give him to us and we could cut off his head.'

I went into his presence and prostrated before him as I was accustomed to do. He said, 'Welcome, my friend. Have you brought any presents from your land?' I replied that I had brought many leather goods, and I presented them to him. They pleased him very much and he wanted them. Then I said to him, 'O King, I saw a man just leave your presence. He is the emissary of a man who is our enemy. Give him to me so that I may kill him, for he has killed some of our nobles and some of the best men amongst us.'

When I said that, he became angry, stretched out his hands and smacked his nose so hard with them that I thought he must have broken it. If the earth had gaped open at that moment, I would have leapt into it to escape his anger. Then I said, 'O King, by Allah, if I had known that you would dislike my request, then I would never have made it.'

He said, 'Would you ask me to give you the emissary of a man to whom the great *Namus* comes as he once came to Musa, so that you may kill him?'

I asked, 'Is that who he truly is, O King?'

He replied, 'Woe upon you, 'Amr. Obey me and follow him, for indeed he follows the Truth and will have victory over all who oppose him, just as Musa was victorious over Pharaoh and his people.'

I asked, 'Will you take my pledge of allegiance to him in Islam?'

"He said, 'Yes,' so I stretched out my hand and pledged allegiance to him on the basis of Islam. Then I went back to my companions, having had a complete change of heart. I concealed my acceptance of Islam from my companions, then left in order to go to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. On the way I met Khalid ibn al-Walid, and this all happened before the Conquest of Makka. He was coming from the direction of Makka. I asked him, 'Where are you going, Abu Sulayman?'

"He replied, 'By Allah, the matter has become clear for me: the man is a Prophet. I am going to him, by Allah, and will become a Muslim.'

"I told him, 'By Allah, I myself have only come except to become a Muslim.'

"We came to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and Khalid ibn al-Walid went forward, became Muslim and pledged his allegiance. Then I approached him and said, 'Messenger of Allah, I pledge allegiance to you on the basis that I be forgiven for all the sins that I have committed before and not be reminded of them again.'

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'Pledge allegiance, 'Amr, for both embracing Islam and *hijra* cut off everything that comes before them.' I pledged allegiance to him and left." (Ahmad)

One of the sages of the Arabs, Aktham ibn Sayfi ibn Ribah

Al-Alusi mentioned that when the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, first appeared in Makka and started calling people to Islam, Aktham sent his son Hubaysh to go and find out about him. When he returned with news, he gathered together the Banu Tamim and said, "Banu Tamim, do not bring me fools, for a fool is the one who weakens those who are above him and hinders those who are below him. There is no good in a person who does not possess an intellect. I have become old and weak, so if you see something good in me accept it, and if you see

something else, then set me straight. My son has spoken with this man face to face and has brought me news about him and his Scripture. In it, he orders people to enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, encourages good character, and calls upon people to affirm the Oneness of Allah, renounce idols and stop making oaths by the Fire. Those of good sense amongst you know that what he calls people to is excellent and that the right course is to abandon what he forbids.

Of all people, you have the most right to provide help and support to Muhammad. If what he is calling people to is true, then he will be yours before all other people, and if what he is calling people to is false, then you will be in a position to stop him. The Bishops of Najran used to mention his description, and Sufyan ibn Mujashi⁴ used to speak of him before that and, indeed, called him 'Muhammad'. You must be the first to come to him, not the last. Go to him willingly now, not unwillingly later.

Surely that to which Muhammad calls us, even if it were not a religion, is something that people should adopt in order to improve their character, so obey me and follow my instructions. I ask for you something that will never be taken from you, and whereby you shall become the mightiest and largest tribe in Arabia with the most extensive domain. I see that this matter is one that no mighty person avoids without becoming weak and no weak person takes on without becoming mighty. The first one who takes this on will leave nothing for the last. This is a matter that will dictate what follows it. Those who come first to it will be drowned in its meanings, and those who come next will follow them. You must have strong determination and be united, for division is powerlessness."

Thereupon, Malik ibn Nuwayra said, "Your *shaykh* has become senile."

Aktham responded, "It will be to my eternal regret if I do not go to something the like of which I have not seen. O Malik, truth when it is established dispels falsehood."

Then he left to go to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and one hundred people followed him. After they had gone some small distance, Hubaysh went to their camels, slaughtered them all and split open the few provisions that

they had so that they were wasted in the sands. Then he fled. Thus thirst took Aktham and he died. Just before he died, he advised those with him to follow the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and he asked them to bear witness that he had embraced Islam. Thereupon the following verse was revealed *"If anyone leaves his home, making hijra to Allah and His Messenger, and death catches up with him, it is Allah Who will reward him."* (4:99) (*al-Wafa' bi-Abwal al-Mustafa*)

The Quraysh sent 'Urwa ibn Mas'ud ath-Thaqafi to convince the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, to return to Madina after he had come towards Makka to make 'Umra. When 'Urwa returned, he addressed the Quraysh and said: "Tribe of Quraysh, I have visited Chosroes in his kingdom, Caesar in his kingdom, and the Negus in his kingdom, but I have never seen a king whose people venerated him so much as the Companions of Muhammad venerate him. I saw a group of people around him who never let anything bad happen to him. See what you make of that!"

Such are the Companions of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. Read the books of history, if you want, and you will find many companions of Prophets and Messengers whose tales are much like those that we have related here.

Chapter 12

The Positions of some Western scholars

In this book we have cited the opinions of many different Western scholars as regards the Islamic message and its Messenger; but we also have written another, highly detailed, book on the subject. If the reader wants to study the matter further, he should read my book *Europe and Islam*. What follows will suffice for the purposes of this book.

Bernard Shaw honours the Prophet of Islam

Professor 'Izz ad-Din Faraj said in his book *Prophet of Islam*: "We do not only consider Bernard Shaw to be a great writer and English philosopher, but also consider him to be one of the most important thinkers and philosophers of the entire world. One of the defining features of this great philosopher is that he was extremely bold, even to the extent of recklessness, and extremely frank and candid. If he ever expressed an opinion, it was always an opinion of whose validity he was convinced and which he believed in very strongly.

While he was travelling in Mumbai in India, he wrote a letter in which he clearly expressed his view that the 'Muhammadan religion' was suitable for all nations and all epochs. In it, he praised this Messenger for his bounty, greatness and genius, saying: "I have always held the religion of Muhammad in high estimation because of its wonderful vitality. It is the only religion which appears to me to possess that assimilating capacity to the changing phase of existence which can make itself appeal to every age."

Then he changed tack, saying, "It is undeniable that the world attaches great importance to prophecies of great men. I have prophesied about the faith of Muhammad that it would be

acceptable to the Europe of tomorrow as it is beginning to be acceptable to the Europe of today. The clerics of the Middle Ages painted Islam in the blackest of colours, either on account of ignorance or on account of reprehensible bigotry.

They were, in truth, conditioning themselves to hate Muhammad and his religion; and considered him to be an enemy of Christ. "I have studied him – the wonderful man – and in my opinion far from being an anti-Christ, he must be called the 'Saviour of Humanity'.

I believe that if a man like him were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world, he would succeed in solving its problems in a way that would bring the much-needed peace and happiness to it that it is most in need of. In the nineteenth century some sincere thinkers, like Carlyle, Goethe and Gibbon, realised the integral worth of the religion of Muhammad.

Thus, there has been an agreeable change in the position of Europe *vis-à-vis* Islam. In the present century, Europe has gone some way down this path, and is beginning to be enamoured of the creed of Muhammad. In the next century, it may go further in recognising the utility of that creed in solving its problems: it is in that spirit that my prophecy should be understood. In the present day, so many of the sons of Europe have entered into the religion of Muhammad that it has become possible to say that the conversion of Europe to Islam has begun."¹

Thus are Islam and the Noble Prophet described by one of the greatest English writers. Thus did one of the greatest philosophers of Europe attest to the Prophet's greatness.

Bernard Shaw wrote down these words after giving the matter much thought and after researching it thoroughly. He wrote this letter after he had come to know that the *deen* of this Prophet had an appropriate solution to every problem, whether economic or social, that any society in any epoch might face.

This great writer only put these words to paper after he had studied the principles of this *deen* and its clear signs in great

1. This quotation from Bernard Shaw is a translation from the Arabic, so there may be slight discrepancies between what you find here and Shaw's original words.

depth, for if he had not studied it in great depth he would never have been able to say: "In the present century, Europe has gone some way down this path, and is beginning to be enamoured of the creed of Muhammad. In the next century, it may go further in recognising the utility of that creed in solving its problems."

Bernard Shaw had looked at the Arabs before Islam and had found them to have been sunk in a miasma of utter moral depravity, chaos, barbarism and perpetual war. He discovered them to be a race who killed their daughters and looked upon their women as being less than human and objects of mockery. He saw them to be the most boastful of regarding genealogy and noble ancestry: every clan would claim that it was unique in the extent of its glorious deeds. They went to such extremes in this regard that they even recorded the bloodlines of their camels and horses and in this way sought to raise them above all other camels and horses. If they sought superiority over other Arabs in this way, then what do you think their view would be of someone who is far removed from them in terms of tribe and people, and differs from them in terms of language and customs?

Then he looked again at the Arab peoples after they had accepted the call of the Noble Prophet, and found them acting and interacting with everyone in a completely different way: they believed there to be no difference between an Arab or a non-Arab except on the basis of *taqwa* and right action. He found them to be in a state of progress and civilisation, their reach extending into the east and into the west. He saw how kingdoms had fallen under their sway with such ease, and how peoples of all colours and backgrounds had become content with Islam as their *deen*. He saw that the sciences flowered under their patronage and how the arts had revived and returned to their former glory. Finally, he saw how the religion afforded women great respect and gave them the same rights enjoyed by men.

Bernard Shaw studied the nation of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and found it to be established on morality and sound principles, unlike material concerns and the hoarding of wealth that prevailed in many European cities. Through his studies, he saw the first nation in the history of the

world to be founded on high principles, divine laws and spiritual roots.

Shaw saw a nation that was democratic in the widest sense of the word. It was 'democratic' because it did not recognise factional differences or aristocratic distinctions; and it was democratic because it did not distinguish between male or female, or between master and slave, except on the basis of goodness and productive right action. He found that it was a nation that believed in equal opportunity and opened the door to all workers, regardless of their race or colour and regardless of the environment in which they grew up, so that all people of high aspiration might reap the rewards of their industry.

Bernard Shaw studied the nation of this Prophet and found it be constitutional, for the reins of government are checked by a Divine Book, "*which falsehood cannot reach from in front or behind*"; and this is the greatest attribute of constitutional nations. He saw that this Book gave reality to all the objectives of constitutional government. It stipulated that rule was by consultation; erased individual, factional and racial privileges; removed the differences between the classes in terms of rights and obligations; and stipulated that everyone be governed by a single set of principles, making no difference between governor or governed, white or black, and male or female.

This is the nation that was based on the call of Muhammad. With that in mind, is Bernard Shaw not right when he describes this Noble Prophet as being the 'Saviour of Humanity'? Is he not right when he follows that by saying: "I believe that if a man like him [Muhammad] were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world, he would succeed in solving the problems in a way that would bring the much-needed peace and happiness."

Bernard Shaw studied the Islamic way of life and realised that it was based on mutual responsibility, solidarity and the cooperation of individuals and nations with one another. He saw this to be the secret of its success.

For in Islam husband and wife form one entity in the way that they live in this world: they complete one other. The basis of their relationship is love and compassion. The life of a man is

only half complete until he gets married, for a woman is his other half, and marriage is viewed as being half of the *Deen*. Giving expression to these concepts, Allah says in the Noble Qur'an: *"Among His Signs is that He created spouses for you of your own kind so that you might find tranquillity in them, and has placed affection and compassion between you."* (30:20) He says in another place: *"Anyone, male or female, who does right actions and is a believer, will enter the Garden. They will not be wronged by so much as the tiniest speck."* (4:123) He says: *"Anyone who acts rightly, male or female, being a believer, We will give them a good life and We will recompense them according to the best of what they did."* (16:97)

The rich and poor, and employer and employee, act in solidarity in this life and back each other up: they help each other to achieve goodness and *taqwa*, for the poor have a recognised right to a part of the wealth of the rich. Firstly, this provides support for society, then for the family, and finally for the state. One of the greatest wrong actions in Islam is that a man go to bed full while his neighbour goes hungry. Islam also guarantees a worker his due provided he has done the work he was commissioned to do; by wronging him or delaying the payment of his dues, the employer has committed a terrible wrong action and left himself open to being punished in this world and the Next. It is therefore incumbent upon the poor, and upon employees, to tell the truth, act in good faith and do their jobs well; for if a person does something, Allah loves that he perfect it and do it well.

The governor and the governed are also mutually responsible for the society in which they live. It is incumbent upon the governor to be just and even-handed and to look after his subjects, while it is incumbent upon the governed to obey him, counsel him and support him. Allah says: *"Allah commands you to return to their owners the things you hold on trust and, when you judge between people, to judge with justice. How excellent is what Allah exhorts you to do! Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing. You who believe, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in command among you."* (4:57-58)

Thus mutual responsibility and treating one another well, were the supports upon which the life of Muslim society was built, and this was the essence of the Islamic Message. Let us

next compare that to the world shaped by the material ambitions and secular systems that have arisen in the West and which they then forced upon the rest of the world. What have the leaders of humanity done today? They have exchanged Allah's blessing for unbelief, and discord and mutual disagreement for mutual responsibility and cooperation; and yet they have failed to bring justice, peace and brotherhood to the world.

Bearing all this in mind, was Bernard Shaw, then, not correct to put to paper his eternal words when he said, "I believe that if a man like him [Muhammad] were to assume the dictatorship of the modern world, he would succeed in solving its problems in a way that would bring the much-needed peace and happiness"?

Mr. Candler¹ delivered an address to a large gathering in which he echoed a great many of Shaw's sentiments concerning Islam and its Prophet. He said: "Today, the Islamic religion extends from Marrakech to Ankara and from Zanzibar to China, and has begun to make great strides in Central Africa: many nations there have embraced it, and it has gained a solid foothold in the Congo, which has become an Islamic land (and especially in the Sudan, which is the most powerful country in the Congo basin). As far as India goes, the Western phenomenon of urbanisation – which is helping to destroy the basics of idolatry – has paved the way for the Islamic religion and no other. The population of India has reached 255 million, 50 million of whom are, at this present time, Muslim. Additionally, more than half of the entire population of Africa are now Muslim. This indicates that the influence of Islam is spreading and that the number of Muslims is growing."

Then he went on to say: "Islam has been of more benefit to urbanisation than Christianity, and spread wide the banner of equality and brotherhood. The evidence that we can provide for this has been taken directly from the accounts of English officers abroad, and from the books of the majority of explorers who wrote about the positive effects of the Islamic religion. Signs of this are readily apparent, for as soon as any of the African nations

1. This is a transliteration of the Arabic version of the name, as the translator was unable to find out exactly who this man was.

adopt Islam, many of the repulsive practices of that nation disappear – practices such as idol worship, following the ways of Satan, associating others with the Almighty, cannibalism, indiscriminate murder, the burying alive of children, and superstition. These practices are replaced with praiseworthy ones: societal reform, love of cleanliness, avoiding filth and refuse, the embodiment of good character and bringing honour to one's person.

Giving hospitality to guests becomes an obligatory part of life, while drinking alcohol comes to be seen as something blameworthy. All forms of gambling are forbidden, while lewd dancing and the indiscriminate intermingling of the sexes are frowned upon. The people in such societies come to see chastity in women as a virtue and hold fast to the qualities of good character.”

The Islamic *Shari'a* and the Islamic religion do not permit this concept of freedom to go to excess: shamelessness and giving free rein to one's animal desires are forbidden. Islam is the religion that is universally applicable to everyone: it stops people from acting on the basis of whim, and makes the spilling of blood unlawful. It forbids the harsh treatment of animals and spurs people on to good action and brotherhood. It calls for wives to be treated equally in polygamous marriages and for a curb to be placed on stubborn appetite.

Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali Nadwi mentions Jean's¹ opinion and comments on it

Jean said: “In the difficult task set for him, not one of the earlier messengers achieved success at the beginning of his affair, like that achieved by Muhammad, peace be upon him when, in the first few moments of his prophethood, he presented himself as a Prophet who had received Divine Revelation, to those who knew his human weaknesses and knew him better than any other. He presented his Message to his wife, his sturdy slave, his

1. This is a transliteration of the Arabic version of the name, as the translator was unable to find out exactly who this man was. Alternatively, the name could be 'Gene'.

nephew and his old friend, who did not turn away from him or fail him. It was they who preceded all others in believing in his Prophethood. The lot of the pious and godly was turned upside down when it came to Muhammad, and completely changed from what it had been in the times of previous Prophets, for all who knew Muhammad could do naught but love him."

This observation – that those who knew the Prophet best, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and were closest to him, were the ones to enter into his religion first and believe in him the most strongly – is remarkable, for the first to accept the calls of the other Prophets were generally those who did not know them well but had come from outside their lands. As for those who were closely related to them, they were often the most stubborn and the last to follow them.

Thus those who believed in the Message of Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, were those who knew his true nature best, and had observed at first hand, his noble character and right guidance. Every one of these believers suffered great hardships and harsh tests on account of their belief. Even Khadija, the wife of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, spent three years in the grip of starvation, thirst and extreme poverty during the time when the tribes of the Quraysh boycotted the Banu Hashim.

Abu Bakr accompanied the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, when the land of Makka had become too constricting for him to remain there. With the Prophet for company, he left Makka under cloak of darkness, fearful and on his guard, with the enemy right behind them tracking their footprints. Abu Bakr was a worthy companion and fulfilled the covenant of friendship.

As for 'Ali, he spent the night in the place of the Messenger in his bed, as the idolaters had plotted to murder him. As for his slave Zayd, he became like a son to the Noble Prophet, for great affection and compassion were bestowed upon him. When the father who had begotten him from his own loins came to ask for

his son to be returned to him, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, gave Zayd the choice: he could either remain with him or go back with his father. He chose to remain in the company of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, under his merciful wing.

Tolstoy

Professor 'Izz ad-Din Faraj said: "This Russian philosopher was a very fair-minded writer, for when he saw the prejudiced way in which the people of other religions wrote about Islam, his zeal for the truth gripped him to such an extent that he felt compelled to write some words about the life and person of the Prophet of Islam."

He said about him: "The Prophet of Islam was born in the land of the Arabs to poor parents. In his early years, he was a shepherd and liked to retreat to the desert and open country and be alone in his contemplation of Allah, the Creator of existence.

The Arabs of his time worshipped many different gods and went to extremes in their devotion to them and their attempts to gain their pleasure. They devised ways of worshipping them and used to perform many sacrifices for them.

As he grew older, his belief that these "false lords" were grew stronger, and the belief that there was One True God for all of mankind took a firmer hold in his soul.

The faith of Muhammad in this idea grew stronger, and he began to call his nation and family to it, declaring that God had chosen him to give them guidance, and had made a covenant with him to enlighten their inner vision and destroy their false religions. He began to openly declare his creed and his religion.

The essence of the religion to which this Messenger was called is that God is One and there is no god but Him, and so it is not permissible to worship any other than Him; that God is Just and Compassionate to His slaves; and that the final destiny of man is dependent upon Him Alone. If a person believes in Him, God will reward him well, but if a person opposes God's

Law and follows his own whims, He will requite him with a painful punishment in the Hereafter; that God commands people to love Him and to love one another: love of God is by prayer, while love of other people is by cooperating with them in times good and bad; and that those who believe in God should make every effort to avoid pandering to the wishes of their lower appetites and avoid working for the pleasures of this world: they must not serve the body or worship it, but must serve the soul and refine it. Muhammad did not say that he was the sole Prophet of God, but also believed in the Prophethood of Moses and Jesus. He also said that Jews and Christians were not to be forced to abandon their religions.

In the first few years of his missionary activity he suffered great persecution at the hands of the devotees of the ancient religions, as had happened to every Prophet before him who had called people to the truth. This persecution, however, had no effect on his resolve, and he persevered in calling to his people.

The believers were distinguishable from the great majority of the Arabs by their humility, detachment from in this world, industriousness and frugality, and they expended great effort in helping their fellow believers when they were beset by hardship and misfortune.

It was not long before the wider community surrounding the Muslims came to feel great respect for the Muslims and to honour and venerate them. As the days passed, the numbers of Muslims began to grow and grow.

One of the merits of the Islamic religion is that it counsels and commands its followers to think well of and act well towards Jews and Christians and their respective priesthoods. This is true to such an extent that it even permits its followers to marry members of other faiths – anyone of clear insight will recognise straight away the immense degree of tolerance implicit in this.”

Then Tolstoy concludes his brief article by saying: “There is no doubt that this Prophet was one of the great reformers who provided a great service to human society. It is a great enough achievement in itself that he guided his entire nation to the light

of truth and made it lean towards peace and to cease the shedding of blood. It is enough of an achievement in itself that he opened up the way for them to advance and progress. This is a great task that can only be performed by a person who has been granted strength, wisdom and knowledge. A man like this is worthy of veneration and respect."

Muhammad 'Abduh on Tolstoy

The opinions of this Russian thinker were greatly appreciated by Shaykh Muhammad 'Abduh, so he wrote to him as follows:

"To the wise and venerable Monsieur Tolstoy,

We have not had the good fortune to meet you personally, but we have not been denied the opportunity to come to know your soul, for the light of your thoughts has shone upon us, and your opinions have beamed down upon us like little suns. The spirits of all men of intellect have found like-minded company in yours. God has guided you and given you knowledge of the secret of His natural pattern on which He made mankind. He has granted you success by guiding you, for you have realised that man has only been put upon this earth to grow by his knowledge and profit by his actions. You have realised that he should do things that will endure his passing in order to benefit and educate mankind. You know well the state of wretchedness that descends upon man when he deviates from the natural way of doing things and uses his strength – which was only given him to help others – to disturb the peace and tranquillity of his society.

You have looked deeply into religion, stripped aside the prejudices that have covered it over and arrived at the truth of what unity is. You have raised your voice to call people to that which God has guided you to and have preceded them by the work you have done in order to carry them some way along the path. For, just as you have guided people by the things that you have said, you have encouraged them to have strong resolve by the way you have acted; just as your opinions have been a light by which the

misguided can find guidance, so have your actions been an example that those seeking the truth may follow; and just as your generosity has been a rebuke from God to the wealthy, so has it been a source of help and sign of His care for the weak and poor.

The greatest honour that you have achieved, and the greatest reward that you have obtained, for all the pains you have gone to to bring people to right guidance, is that which the negligent refer to as excommunication and expatriation. For what the religious leaders have done to you is naught but an affirmation from them to the masses that you are not one of those who have been misguided. So praise God that they have disassociated you from them and their views, just as you have disassociated yourself from their beliefs.

Know that we wait with bated breath for the gems that will be delivered by your pen in the remaining years of your life. We ask God to give you a long life, preserve your strength, open hearts to an understanding of your words, and drive people to find an example from how you conduct your life.

“Peace be upon you.”

The following extract is taken from the book, *The Prophet of Islam as seen by Western thought*:

“One of the virtuous masters said: ‘My brothers, I want to turn your attention to another matter. The Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, did not spend his whole life amongst his Companions and loved ones. Before his mission began, he spent forty years of his life in Makka amongst the Qurayshite members of his family who were still immersed in idolatry. He engaged with them in trade and conducted transactions in all aspects of his life, night and day. Part of the nature of daily life, and all that it entails by way of giving and taking, is that it lays open a man’s character so that it becomes clear to all whether he is righteous or corrupt. It is a long and rocky path with many tortuous corners and turns. Along this path are deep potholes into which a man may fall. These potholes are created by man’s treacherousness, dishonesty, violating of treaties,

devouring wealth without right, giving short measure, miserliness, not fulfilling people's rights and breaking promises.

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, traversed this difficult and thorny path, and emerged from it pure and unblemished. None of the things that befall the generality of people befell him, and he came to be known as '*al-Amin*' (the 'Trustworthy One').

The Quraysh, even after the advent of his mission and the public announcement of his prophethood, would leave their money and their deposits with him on account of the great trust they had of him. When he, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, made *hijra* from Makka, he left 'Ali behind to return all the trusts that had been left with him to their rightful owners. Even though the Quraysh had strongly opposed his calling people to Islam, and placed every obstacle in his path to prevent him doing so; even though the Quraysh stubbornly resisted him, put sheep's intestines on him while he was praying, threw stones at him and wanted to kill him; and even though the Quraysh plotted against him, called him a magician and poet, attempted to refute his opinions and called his dreams foolish; despite all this, not one of them dared to say anything bad about his character, or dared to accuse him of dishonesty, telling lies, breaking promises, failing to pay his debts or violating a treaty.

Indeed, when a person claims to be a Prophet and says that Divine Revelation has come, it is as if he is claiming '*isma*' and claiming to be free of all character defects and all types of wrong action.

Would it not have been sufficient for the Quraysh – in order for them to refute the Messenger – to mention matters in which the Messenger had acted in an incorrect fashion, or to bear witness against him that he had broken a promise, or that he had cheated them out of their money, or that he had told them lies?

The Quraysh spent their wealth on, and devoted their lives to, their hostility to the Messenger; and they sacrificed their lives and the lives of their children in their battle against him – indeed, a great many of them died and were wounded; but they

were completely unable to make any dirt attach to him, or blacken his character in any way.

The circumstances and affairs of the Messenger were evident, visible and known to all. His enemies were as aware of his conduct as his close friends and loved ones, and he had nothing to hide from them.

One day, the leaders of the Quraysh were gathered together in one of their assemblies and the topic of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was brought up. An-Nadr ibn al-Harith, who was a very devious and sophisticated man and knew a lot about worldly matters, was present in the gathering. He said to those around him: 'O Tribe of Quraysh, the problem of Muhammad has made you completely hopeless, for you have been unable to think of any way of describing what has befallen you. Muhammad grew up amongst you and came to manhood under your gaze. He was the most liked man amongst you, the one who was the truest of speech and you saw him as the Trustworthy One. When grey hair started to appear in his head, and he began to present this matter to you, you said that he was a magician, a soothsayer, a poet and a madman (one possessed by the *jinn*). By Allah, I have heard what you have to say, but he is none of the things that you said.'

Abu Jahl was the man who was most hostile to the Messenger and had once said to him, "Muhammad, I do not say that you are a liar, but I do reject what you have brought and what you are calling people to." Thereupon, Allah sent down this verse: '*We know that what they say distresses you. It is not that they are calling you a liar; the wrongdoers are just denying Allah's Signs.*' (6:34)"

Views of Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali Nadwi

Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali Nadwi said: "The Shaykh of Islam, Ibn Taymiya, may Allah have mercy on him, painted an excellent picture of the Muhammadan Mission and well described its excellence and its fruits in his book *al-Jawab as-Sahih*. He said:

'The *sira* of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is one of his signs; his character, sayings,

actions and *Shari'a* are from among his signs; his community is one of his signs; the knowledge and *Deen* of his community is one of his signs; and the miracles of the righteous people of his community are among his signs.

He continued to carry out Allah's commands – such as speaking the truth, acting justly, and fulfilling promises – in the most complete way possible, never once having been recorded as telling a lie, treating anyone unjustly or making excuses. He was the most truthful and just of people, and the most faithful in fulfilling promises. He remained thus whatever the circumstances in which he found himself – in both peace and war, security and insecurity, richness and poverty, scarcity and plenty, and victory and loss. He continued to cling to this most perfect of paths until his call had triumphed over all of Arabia, a land which had up to that point been sunk in a quagmire of idolatry, soothsaying, unbelief, unlawful bloodshed, and cutting the ties of kinship. Before his call, the people of that land had no knowledge of the Afterlife. After it, they became the most knowledgeable and religious people on the face of the earth. They became so just and virtuous that when the Christians who had travelled from Syria saw them they said, 'Those who accompanied the Messiah were no better than these people.' If any rational person were to make a comparison between what the knowledge and actions of the Muslims have brought to the world, and what has been left by other civilisations, they would see the huge difference between the two.

When the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, received the command from his Lord to call his near relatives to Islam and warn them, he climbed a hill and called for the tribe of Quraysh to come to him. When they had all gathered together, he said, 'Would you believe me if I were to tell you that an army had reached the foot of this hill?' They replied, 'We have never known you to tell a lie.'" (*ar-Risala al-Muhammadiyya*)

The author of *ar-Risala al-Muhammadiyya* said: "Fifty years ago, the celebrated preacher, Hasan 'Ali, may Allah have mercy

on him, used to distribute a magazine called *Nur al-Islam* ('The Light of Islam') in Patna. In one issue he wrote that a Brahmin friend of his had said to him, 'I see the Messenger of Islam as having been the greatest and most perfect man in the entire world.'

Hasan 'Ali asked him, 'What is it about him that makes you say that he was the most perfect man in the entire world?'

The Brahmin replied, 'I said that because I have found in the person of the Messenger of Islam many different attributes and characteristics that I have never seen combined in any other man in the history of the world. For he was a king, who had absolute sway over all his subjects and was free to act as he saw fit, and yet at the same time was so humble that he saw that nothing in reality belonged to him, and that the entire affair was in the Hands of his Lord. You see him with huge amounts of wealth at his fingertips – camels laden down with treasures would make a constant procession to his capital – and yet at the same time he was so poor that he did not even have enough fuel in his house to cook his food and often went hungry.'

'We see that he was a great leader in times of war, leading his small, ill-equipped armies to great victories over enemy armies of thousands of men bristling with weapons, and yet at the same time we find that he loved peace and preferred reconciliation. He put his name to a document of truce with tranquil heart and unperturbed air, despite the fact that he had thousands upon thousands of brave and eager Companions with him ready to do battle.'

We can see that he was a brave hero who persevered on his own against thousands of enemies, unfazed by their numbers. At the same time, he was soft-hearted, merciful and compassionate and shrank from spilling even one drop of blood.

You can see that although his thoughts were occupied by the affairs of the entire Arabian Peninsula, none of the concerns of his family, wives or children passed him by. At the same time he did not forget the concerns of the poor and destitute. He also concerned himself with the affairs of those people who had forgotten their Lord and opposed His *Deen*: he greatly desired that

they be guided. In summary, he was a man who concerned himself with the business of the entire world, but at the same time had withdrawn from the world to God and cut himself off from it. He was in this world and yet he was not, because his heart was connected with God and nothing else, and he only desired His pleasure.

He never once took personal revenge on anyone, and he used to supplicate to God to bring good to his enemies. He used to want good for his own enemies, but did not forgive the enemies of God and would not leave them to their own devices: he continually warned those who barred people from the Way of God and threatened them with a painful punishment.

You see him renouncing this world, doing without and worshipping his Lord. He used to stand in the night, remembering his Lord and confiding in him. Then, in the day, he was a fearless soldier who would fight with his sword.

You can see that he was a judicious messenger and an infallible Prophet, but at the same time he was a capturer of countries and conqueror of nations. At the same time that he could be described as being the "Sultan of the Arabs" and king of a vast kingdom, he slept on a bed of reeds, and leant upon a pillow filled with palm fibre.

Even after he had received the huge amounts of wealth that had come to him from all parts of the Arabian Peninsula, his family continued to live in hardship and poverty. This wealth would be piled up in the courtyard of his mosque and then his own daughter Fatima would come up to him complaining about how hard it was for her to carry her cooking pot and grind her own flour – her hands had become blistered and the pot had left marks all over her body. At that time, the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to distribute the slaves and slave-girls that came to him as part of his share of the spoils of war amongst the Muslims, but did not give any of it to his daughter. The only thing that he gave her was to make supplication for her and teach her the way that she could best supplicate to her Lord for the things that she needed.

One day, his companion 'Umar came to him. When he came his eyes wandered around the room and all he could see was a bed of palm fronds, upon which the Messenger used to sleep and which would leave marks upon his side, a *sa'* of barley in a small container, and a basket hanging up on a peg. This was all that the Messenger of Allah possessed at a time when nearly half of the Arabs had adopted his *Deen*. When 'Umar saw that, he could not stop the tears flowing from his eyes. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asked him what had caused him to weep and he replied, 'How could I not weep? Caesar and Chosroes enjoy the blessings and good things of this world, while the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, possesses nothing except for what I see in front of me.' The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Are you not content, 'Umar, for Caesar and Chosroes to have their portion of the pleasures of this world, and for us to have the Hereafter to the exclusion of all other people."

When the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had surrounded Makka with his armies in order to conquer it, Abu Sufyan stood beside al-'Abbas looking out upon the armies of the Muslims and the many standard-bearers who were in their vanguard. At the time, Abu Sufyan was still opposed to Islam. He was greatly alarmed by what he saw in front of him: the immense number of soldiers marching upon the valley of Makka and the large number of tribes who had become Muslim and rallied to their banner. The army appeared to him to be like a torrential flood which could not be stopped or even slowed, so he said to his companion, "Abbas, your nephew has become a great king." Al-'Abbas replied to him, being able to see something that Abu Sufyan could not, 'This has nothing to do with kingship, Abu Sufyan; rather it is Prophethood and Messengerhood.

'Adi at-Ta'i, the son of the famous Hatim whose name was a byword for generosity, was the leader of Tay'. One day, he attended the assembly of the Prophet whilst he was still a Christian and observed the respect and veneration that the Companions accorded the Messenger, and the weapons and

armour that they were wearing. That caused doubts to enter his mind as to whether he was in the presence of a king or Prophet. He asked himself, 'Is this a king or one of God's Messengers?' While this thought was going around his head, a poor woman – one of the slave-girls of Madina – came to the Prophet and said to him, 'Messenger of Allah, I want to tell you something in secret.' The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, replied that she should find an empty street in the city and he would come with her and listen to her. Then he got up, went with her and carried out her request. When Ibn Hatim at-Ta'i saw this great humility on the part of the Messenger of Allah, even when he seemed to be surrounded by all the trappings of kingship, the truth became clear and his illusions were stripped away. He felt absolutely certain that what had happened in front of him was a message from God, so he reached for his cross, snatched it from his breast and threw it away. Then he entered into the light of Islam with the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.'

To sum up, there has been no exaggeration or excessive praise in all that we have mentioned here. Everything that we have mentioned is a fact, recorded in the soundest books of history and transmitted by the most trustworthy of people." (*ar-Risala al-Muhammadiyya*)

Chapter 13

Muhammad: a man and a Messenger , may Allah bless him and grant him peace

Muhammad, the Human Messenger

This is a collection of extracts and studies whose purpose is to paint a picture of the Messenger, in terms both of his physical and his spiritual aspects.

Abu Umama, may Allah be pleased with him, related that he asked, "Messenger of Allah, what were the very beginnings of your mission?" The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, replied, "The supplication of my forefather Ibrahim, the good news that 'Isa gave about me, and my mother's vision that a light would come out of her which would illuminate the palaces of Syria." (Ahmad)

The allusion to the supplication of Ibrahim, peace be upon him, is explained in the Quran in *Surat al-Baqara*, where Allah says, relating Ibrahim's words: "*Our Lord, raise up among them a Messenger from them to recite Your Signs to them and teach them the Book and Wisdom and purify them. You are the Almighty, the All-Wise.*" (2:129) The allusion to the good news of 'Isa, peace be upon him, is to His Words: "*And when 'Isa son of Maryam said, 'Tribe of Israel, I am the Messenger of Allah to you, confirming the Torah which came before me and giving you the good news of a Messenger after me whose name is Ahmad.' When he brought them the Clear Signs, they said, 'This is downright magic.'*" (61:6)

Abu Musa, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, called himself by many different names. He said, "I am Ahmad, Muhammad, al-Hashir, al-Muqaffa, the Prophet of Repentance and Battle." (al-Bayhaqi)

Muhammad ibn Jubayr ibn Mut'im related that his father said, "I heard the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, say, "I have different names: I am Muhammad and I am Ahmad; I am al-Mahi ('the Eraser'), with whom Allah wipes away unbelief; I am al-Hashir ('the Gatherer'), at whose feet people will be gathered; I am al-'Aqib ('the one who comes after'), after whom no one else will come." (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Some of his Attributes

Al-Bara', may Allah be pleased with him, said, "The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was the most handsome of men and the most well-proportioned, for he was neither too tall nor too short." (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Al-Bara' ibn 'Azib also said: "The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was of medium height and build with broad shoulders. His hair reached down to his earlobes and he wore red robes. I have not seen anything more beautiful than him." (al-Bukhari and Muslim) According to another variant: "The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was of medium height and build with broad shoulders. He was the greatest of people, and the most handsome. His hair was luxuriant and came down to his earlobes and he was wearing a red robe. I have never seen anything more beautiful than him." (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

As for his speech, he neither said too much or too little, but spoke measured and decisive words. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was mild-tempered – he was neither rough or crude, nor soft or over-emotional. He made the most of his blessings, no matter how small they were, and did not find fault in any of them.

Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "I have never seen anything more beautiful than the Messenger of Allah. It was as if the sun were shining out from his face. I have never seen anyone who walked more swiftly than he. It was as if the earth folded up for him: we would make great efforts to keep up

with him, while he would remain completely unflustered.” (*Dala'il an-nubuwwa*)

Ibn 'Abbas related that 'Umar ibn al-Khattab said, when relating the story of when he visited the Messenger of Allah and felt pain on account of the small amount of possessions he saw there: “I sat down and raised my head to look around the house, but by Allah, I did not see anything that returned my gaze except for three items of furniture. I said, ‘Ask Allah, Messenger of Allah, to expand the wealth of your Community, for He has given both Persia and Byzantium great wealth, and they do not worship Allah.’ He sat up and said, ‘Are you in doubt, O Ibn al-Khattab, that they are people whose good things have been brought forward to them and given them in this world?’ I said, ‘I seek forgiveness of Allah, Messenger of Allah.’” (*Dala'il an-nubuwwa*)

He was not shameless or indecent

'Abdullah, the son of 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with them both, said, “The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was neither shameless nor immoral. He used to say, ‘The best people amongst you are those who have the best character.’” (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

From Abu Hurayra's description of him

Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, said, “The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, never once found fault with food: if he felt appetite for it, he ate it, and if not, he left it.” (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

His smile

'A'isha, may Allah be pleased with her, said, “I never once saw the Messenger of Allah laugh in such a way that you could see his uvula: he used to smile.”

Merciful to children

Anas ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "I have never seen anyone more compassionate with children than the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace."

Anas ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was one of the most playful people with children." (*Dala'il an-nubuwwa*)

He was not immoral

'A'isha, may Allah be pleased with her, said about the character of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace: "He was neither immoral nor shameless, nor did he raise his voice or shout out in the marketplace. He did not reward a wrong action with another wrong action, but pardoned and forgave." (at-Tirmidhi)

Masruq ibn 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was neither shameless nor immoral. He used to say, 'The best people amongst you are those who have the best character.'" (Muslim)

Anas describes the Messenger

Anas, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "Of all people, the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, was one of the most handsome, generous and brave." (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Anas also said, "The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, did not call people names, speak lewdly or curse. When he censures any of us, he would say, 'What is wrong with him? May his brow be dusty!'" (al-Bukhari)

"I have been sent as a caller and a mer cy"

'A'isha, may Allah be pleased with her, said: "The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was never once

given the choice between two things without choosing the easier of the two, so long as it was not sinful. If it was sinful, then he was the most distant of people from that. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, did not once seek revenge upon anyone for his own sake, but if the sanctity of Allah were broken he would take revenge for it."

It was related that when the tooth of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was broken and his face cut open on the day of Uhud, his Companions took that very hard and said, "You should supplicate against them!" He replied, "I have not been sent to curse people, but have been sent as a supplicator for people, and a mercy. O Allah, guide my people, for they do not know what they do."

It is related that 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, once said, "I ransom you with my father and mother, Messenger of Allah. Nuh called for his people to be punished by saying, '*My Lord, do not leave a single one of the unbelievers on earth*' (71:28). If you had made supplication against us in the same way, we would all have been destroyed. Even though your back was stamped on, your face bloodied and your tooth broken, you refused to say anything but good for us. You said, 'O Allah, forgive my people, for they know not what they do.'"

Qadi Abu al-Fadl, may Allah have mercy on him, said, commenting on the above quotation from 'Umar: "Look at the immense levels of virtue, excellence, good character, generosity of nature, patience and clemency reflected in these words! He did not simply remain silent, but forgave them, felt compassion for them, supplicated for them and strove to mediate for them when he said things like 'forgive' and 'guide'. Then he explained the reason for his compassion and mercy with the word that followed 'my people' and then apologised for their ignorance by saying, 'for they do not know'.

From 'A'isha's description of him

'A'isha, may Allah be pleased with her, said: "I never once saw the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, strike any of his servants, any of his womenfolk or anything else

with his own hand, except when he was making *jihad* in the Way of Allah. He never took anything from them or took revenge on anyone, except when it was for the sake of Allah. When it was for the sake of Allah, he would take revenge. He was never presented with two matters without taking the easier one of the two, so long as it was not sinful. If it was sinful, then he was the most distant of people from it." (al-Bukhari)

He takes the side of truth

This world and its affairs did not make the Prophet angry, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. When any true matter disturbed him, nobody knew it and nobody undertook to take revenge for his anger. He only got angry for the truth. (*Dala'il annubuwwa*)

He said, "Tell me the needs of those who are not able to tell me of their needs themselves. If anyone tells a sultan of the needs of someone who is unable to tell him himself, Allah will make his feet firm on the Day of Rising."

His action was constant

'Alqama said that he asked 'A'isha, may Allah be pleased with her, "How were the good actions of the Messenger of Allah? Did he single out certain days on which he did things?" She replied, "No, his actions were constant; and which of you is able to do what the Messenger of Allah did?" (Muslim)

According to Ibn Ishaq: "He was called '*Al-Amin*' ('the Trustworthy') on account of the noble attributes which were combined in his person."

The *adab* of the Qur'an

'Atiyya al-'Awfi said about Allah's statement, "*Indeed you have a truly vast character*" (68:4), that 'vast character' is 'the *adab* of the Qur'an'.

The most generous of people

Ibn 'Abbas, may Allah be pleased with them both, said: "He was the most generous of people, and was at his most generous in Ramadan when Jibril came to see him. Jibril would come to him every night during the month of Ramadan in order to go over the Quran with him. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was more generous with his wealth than a cooling wind that brings goodness."

Forbearing

Anas ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "I was walking with the Messenger of Allah, who was wearing a Najrani cloak with a coarse fringe, when a desert Arab caught up with him and pulled him towards him so violently that the fringe of the cloak left a mark on the shoulder of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. Then the Arab said, 'Give instructions that I be given some of the money from Allah that you have in your possession.' The Prophet turned to him and laughed, then gave instructions that something be given him." (al-Bukhari and Muslim)

It is related that a desert Arab came to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and asked him for alms. He gave it to him and asked him if he had treated him well. The desert Arab replied, "No, you have not treated me well!" The Muslims were angered by that and got up to deal with him, but the Messenger of Allah indicated that they should desist. Then he got up, went into his house, sent for the man, and gave him extra. When he had done that, he asked the man again if he had treated him well. The man replied, "Yes, may Allah reward you with good from your family and tribe."

Thereupon the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said to him, "When you said what you said, that caused feelings of outrage in the hearts of my Companions. If we have done rightly by you, then stand in front of them and say what you have just said to me, so that their feelings of outrage towards you

may disappear. The desert Arab said that he would do as the Prophet asked, and then departed. He came back later and the Prophet said, "This desert Arab said what he said and so we gave him more. Now he claims that he is content – is that so?" He replied, "Yes, may Allah reward you with good from your family and tribe." Then the Prophet said, "The likeness of this man and me is that of a man who has a she-camel that has run away. People try to catch it, but that only makes it shy away more. So its owner says to them, 'Clear the way between me and my she-camel, for I am more compassionate towards it and more knowledgeable about it than you.' He goes around to face it and then pushes it back with clods of earth until it comes and kneels down; then he saddles it and mounts it. If I had left you to your own devices when the man said what he said, you would have killed him and he would have entered the Fire."(*ash-Shifa'*)

His bravery

Shu'ba related from Abu Ishaq that a man asked al-Bara' ibn 'Azib, may Allah be pleased with him, "Did you flee and leave the Messenger of Allah on the Day of Hunayn?" He said, "Yes; but the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, did not flee. The Hawazin were a people who possessed many archers. When we met them, we launched an attack against them and defeated them. Then the Muslims went forward to gather the booty, and they received us with a shower of arrows, so we fled. As for the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, he did not flee. He was mounted upon his white camel with Abu Sufyan ibn al-Harith holding his reins, saying, "Come to me! I am the Prophet and that is no lie. I am the son of 'Abd al-Muttalib!"

The essential nature of the character of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace

Drawing on all of the *hadiths* quoted here as well as other sources, we intend in this section to provide a firm definition of the character of the Messenger of Allah, which is the fount of

every noble attribute. 'A'isha was asked about the character of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and she said, "His character was the Qur'an."

Although this description is completely clear and unambiguous, we need to define that more fully; for the Qur'an mentions both the initial stages and the acme of virtue and good character, all of which could be called Qur'anic good character.

The Qur'an makes it clear that the believers are not all the same when it comes to good character, and mentions the different ranks that they may attain. It talks of the ambivalent (*muqtasid*) and of those who outdo others in doing good, and mentions the Companions of the Right and Those who are Brought Near. It explains that those who are Brought Near are few in number, for Allah says about them: "*Those are the Ones Brought Near, in Gardens of Delight: a large group of the earlier people but few of the later ones*" (66:13-16), while He says about the Companions of the Right: "*The Companions of the Right: a large group of the earlier people and a large group of the later ones.*" (66:40-42).

An example in the Qur'an of the different possible levels of virtue can be found in the following verse: Allah says: "*The repayment of a bad action is one equivalent to it*" (42:37), which shows that repaying bad with bad can be just.

But the Qur'an, despite explaining the inherent justice in this ruling, does also mention a higher level of this noble attribute, and that is 'controlling rage'. So the one who has the ability to repay a bad action with another but controls his rage is higher, in terms of good character, than the one who meets bad with bad.

This is not the end of the matter, for the Qur'an goes further and mentions a third level for this noble attribute, beyond 'repaying bad with bad', and 'controlling anger'. That level is the level of 'forgiveness', and if a person forgives when he has the ability to 'repay bad with bad', he has attained a higher level of good character.

Finally, the Qur'an goes beyond all of this and mentions the highest level of good character, the level of those who have been brought near. That level is *ihsan* ('excellence'). Allah says: "*The repayment of a bad action is one equivalent to it. But if anyone pardons*

and puts things right, his reward is with Allah.” (42:37) Allah says: “Those who control their rage and pardon other people. Allah loves the people of ihsan.” (3:134)

All of the levels mentioned here are noble and all of them are part of good character, but some are of a higher level than others, and man’s closeness to Allah depends upon which level he acts on.

It is right for us now to ask ourselves the following question: When ‘A’isha, may Allah be pleased with her, described the character of the Messenger of Allah as being the Qur’an, was she referring to the lowest level of Qur’anic character? Or to the middle levels? Or to the highest level?

The Qur’an solves this riddle for us by defining for us, in a very general way, the level of Qur’anic character that the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, reached. Allah, Exalted is He, says to His Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace: *“Indeed you are upon a truly vast character.”* (68:4)

According to Qadi ‘Iyad: “He praises him for the gifts that He has given him. He guides him to Himself and confirms His praise of him using two particles of emphasis (*‘inna’* and *‘la’*) when He says, *“Indeed you are upon a truly vast character.”*”

It is said that these words (*“vast character”*) refer to the Quran; it is said that they refer to Islam; it is said they indicate a noble nature; and it is said that they indicate the fact that the Prophet had no aspiration except to Allah.

Al-Wasiti said, ‘Allah praised him for his complete acceptance of the blessings that He had bestowed upon him, and preferred him over others by that, because He had created him with that character.’”

Some of the Companions and followers commented on this noble verse: ‘Ibn ‘Abbas, may Allah be pleased with them both, said that the meaning of the verse was that “There is no *deen* more beloved to Allah, or more pleasing to Him, than it; and it is the *Deen* of Islam.” Qatada said, “It is the commands of Allah that he used to act by, and the prohibitions of Allah that he used to refrain from. The meaning of the verse is, “You embody the character which Allah has ordered you in the Qur’an to embody.”

Despite all of the things that have been said about this verse –

that by it, Allah is praising, honouring and celebrating His Prophet – and despite our belief that the verse encompasses all of these meanings, we still feel that it is our duty to try and elucidate the level of this ‘vast character’ still further.

For some people might wonder whether there are other Prophets or saints who share this rank of vast character with the Prophet. Are some of the angels who have been sent near to that level?

They might ask themselves:

Was Ibrahim of a truly vast character – he who was forbearing, compassionate, penitent?

Was Isma‘il of a truly vast character – he who was pleasing to his Lord?

Was ‘Isa of a truly vast character – he whom Allah made blessed wherever He was? May peace and blessings be upon our Prophet and all the other Prophets.

Are the angels of truly vast characters – those who “do not disobey Allah in respect of any order He gives them and carry out what they are ordered to do”?

Do any one of these share the same rank as the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace?

Was anyone who was a Messenger of Allah of a truly vast character?

The Qur’an helps us to discover the answer to these questions and says something that delights all lovers of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace: The Qur’an settles the matter and leaves absolutely no room for argument or doubt. Allah tells His Noble Messenger: “*Say: ‘My prayer and my rites, my living and my dying, are for Allah alone, the Lord of all the worlds, Who has no partner. I am commanded to be like that and I am the first of the Muslims.’*” (6:164-165)

This Qur’anic verse defines the level of Qur’anic character attained by the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. It was its pinnacle and highest peak.

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, was sent not merely to propagate good character but to *perfect* it, as the *hadith* testifies. He was sent to perfect good character through his being, conduct, sayings and message. What this indicates, therefore, is

that before the coming of the Messenger good character had not yet reached perfection, as 'the first of the Muslims' had not yet come into existence. Before him, good character was deficient: it lacked something, and the element which it lacked was absolute submission of oneself to Allah.

No being – whether he were a Prophet or an angel near to the Divine Presence – had until that point reached the absolute pinnacle of submission to Allah; and the pinnacle of submission to Allah, or the state of being of the first of the Muslims (for the two terms mean the same thing), is nothing other than the pinnacle of noble character. Up until that point, that lordly being who was to become the first of the Muslims, the first in respect of the angels and the first in respect of mankind, and he who will remain the first of them forever – had not yet come into existence.

Therefore, humanity was deficient before him and every single being was deficient. Indeed, existence was deficient, both materially and metaphorically. The earth needed the purest of bodies to purify its ground and the sky needed the purest of spirits to perfume its air. Creation needed a person of that vast character, by whom Allah could complete His *Deen* and perfect His Blessing, and whose Prophetic Message He could be pleased with for the entirety of mankind. This *deen*, and this message, is one of total submission to Allah, and the Qur'an came down to define for us the ways and means by which we can fulfil it.

The *Deen* of Islam is absolute submission to Allah and devoting oneself to what He loves and is pleased with. *"If anyone desires anything other than Islam as a deen, it will not be accepted from him."* (3:85) How could something that is contradictory to submitting one's face to Allah possibly be accepted. For submission to Allah is the essence of religiosity and the upright *deen* is the only *deen*.

The only text, the only Divine Book in the entire world that gives clear instructions of how to submit oneself to Allah, is the Noble Qur'an.

If a man were to succeed in totally submitting himself to Allah, he would have reached the summit of human possibility and the pinnacle of good character. People vary as to the extent of their submission to Allah, but there needs to be someone who reaches first place and submits more than anyone else. That person was

the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, as is attested by the Qur'an: "*Say: 'My prayer and my rites, my living and my dying, are for Allah alone, the Lord of all the worlds, Who has no partner: I am commanded to be like that and I am the first of the Muslims.'*" (6:164-165) The word 'Muslim' in Arabic literally means 'one who submits'; but the Qur'an does not describe a single person, other than the Messenger of Allah, as being the first of the Muslims.

If this man, who was the first of the Muslims and the perfecter of good character, had not come into being, the world would still be waiting for him to come and perfect it and the world would still be both materially and spiritually deficient.

By his coming into existence and his prophethood, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, Allah's wisdom and His *Deen* became complete. Allah says: "*Today I have perfected your deen for you and completed My blessing upon you and I am pleased with Islam as a deen for you.*" (5:3) May Allah bless and protect you, O my Master, O Messenger of Allah.

There is no doubt at all that the noble attributes which the Noble Qur'an applauds and which the Prophet, in harmony with the Noble Qur'an, embodied are almost uncountable. Some of these attributes are enumerated in the following few Traditions.

Anas, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: "If a man combines the following three attributes within his heart, he will taste the sweetness of faith: loving Allah and His Messenger more than anything else, loving his fellow man only for the sake of Allah, and hating to return to disbelief after Allah has saved him from it as he would hate to be thrown into the Fire."

Anas, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "None of you is truly a believer until I am more beloved to him than his family, his wealth, and everyone else."

'Abdullah ibn 'Amr, may Allah be pleased with them both, related that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "The Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hand the Muslims are safe, and the Muhajir is the one who leaves whatever Allah has prohibited."

Anas related that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "None of you truly believes until he likes for his brother what he likes for himself."

'Abdullah related that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Insulting and abusing a Muslim is deviance, and fighting him is disbelief."

Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: "There is *sadaqa* due on every joint of a person's body on every day on which the sun rises. Putting things right between people is *sadaqa*. Helping a man with his mount, helping him up onto it, and lifting his baggage onto it are all forms of *sadaqa*."

Abu Mas'ud, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "If a person spends upon his family, expecting by that a reward from Allah, it is an act of *sadaqa*."

Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Nothing that you spend desiring the pleasure of Allah will go unrewarded, even if it were no more than a morsel of food put in the mouth of your wife."

'Abdullah ibn 'Amr, may Allah be pleased with them both, related that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: "There are four characteristics that, if combined in one person, make him a complete hypocrite; and if anyone has even one of them, he has an aspect of hypocrisy in his heart until he gives it up. Those characteristics are that when he speaks, he lies; that when someone makes a pact with him, he betrays his trust; that when he makes a promise, he breaks it; and that when he quarrels, he acts immorally."

Abu Hurayra related that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "The signs of the hypocrite are three: when he speaks he lies, when he makes a promise he breaks it, and when he is trusted he betrays his trust."

Responsibility

Ibn 'Amr, may Allah be pleased with them both, related that he heard the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, say: "Each of you is a shepherd and each of you is responsible for his flock. An imam is responsible for his congregation; a man is responsible for his family; a woman is responsible for the house of her husband; a slave is responsible for the property of his master. Each is a shepherd looking after his flock." Ibn 'Amr said, "I think that he may have said, "A man is responsible for the property of his father"."

The Companions did not raise their voices over the voice of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

Anas ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, once missed Thabit ibn Qays and asked about him. A man said that he would bring some news as to his whereabouts, then he went to him and found him sitting with his head hanging down. The man asked him, "What is the matter?" Thabit replied, "Evil. Someone used to raise his voice above the voice of the Prophet, so his actions have come to nothing and he is one of the people of the Fire." The man went and informed the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, what Thabit had said." Musa ibn Anas said, "He returned to Thabit a second time with tremendous good news, for the Prophet, peace be upon him, had said, "Go to him and tell him, "You are not one of the people of the Fire – you are one of the people of the Garden"."

The position of the Companions with regard to the Messenger of Allah

According to the author of *ar-Risala al-Muhammadiyya*: "The effect of the love of the Companions and the secret of their wholehearted dedication to the cause is in their obedience to the Messenger. For absolute obedience; taking on the character of the Messenger of Allah; being coloured with his dye; preferring his *Shari'a* to the appetites of one's self, one's customs and one's traditions; and expending one's lifeblood and valuables in the way of his

call – all these things would be inconceivable without there being an immense esteem for the Prophet emanating from the depths of one's soul, and without one feeling a deep love for him – a love that has saturated every part of one's heart and senses. With that in mind, Allah says: "Say: 'If your fathers or your sons or your brothers or your wives or your tribe, or any wealth you have acquired, or any business you fear may slump, or any home that pleases you, are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger and doing jihad in His Way, then wait until Allah brings about His command. Allah does not guide people who are deviators.'" (9:24)

Because of that, the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, were the most eager people to obey him, and the swiftest to respond to his call. They were the most active in fulfilling his instructions and the most patient. And, because of that, they have grasped the winning ticket and the largest dividend and will keep them until the Day of Rising.

One of those Companions was Abu Bakr as-Siddiq, who honoured and loved the Messenger of Allah more than himself and more than his life, and who was more concerned for the health of the Messenger, peace be upon him, than for his own health. One day 'Utba ibn Rabi'a hit Abu Bakr in the face with the sharp edges of his patched-up leather sandals and leapt upon his stomach and beat him until his nose was indistinguishable from the rest of his face. The Banu Taym carried Abu Bakr in a sheet of cloth, in no doubt that he must have died from their violent treatment of him. But Abu Bakr asked at the end of the day: "What has happened to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace?" When he was told that he was safe and healthy, he said, "I swear to Allah that I will not let food or drink pass my mouth until I have gone to see the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him." (*al-Bidaya wa an-nihaya*)

Another of those Companions was the Ansari woman who was told that the dearest of her family to her had been martyred during the Battle of Uhud. She was told that her father, brother and husband were all dead, but what most concerned her was the condition of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him. They told her, "Praise be to Allah, he is well and is as you would wish him to be." When she saw him she said, "Every misfortune, now that you

are safe, is negligible." (Ibn Ishaq)

The features and special qualities of this civilisation

This Abrahamic-Muhammadan civilisation does not know idolatry or *shirk*, and does not permit it in any shape or form in any time or place, for the greatest aspiration and supplication of Ibrahim, peace be upon him, was: "*Keep me and my sons from worshipping idols.*" (14:37)

The greatest counsel he had for both nations and individuals was: "*Have done with the defilement of idols and have done with telling lies. Be people of pure natural belief in Allah, not associating anything else with Him.*" (22:28-29)

This civilisation knows nothing of pandering to worldly appetites, fighting for material ends and jostling for power and position, for we believe that "*This abode of the Next World: We grant it to those who do not seek to exalt themselves in the earth or to cause corruption in it. The successful outcome is for the godfearing.*" (28:83)

There is no racism in this civilisation; there is no difference between white or black, Arab or non-Arab. We are all the sons of Adam, and Adam was created from dust. An Arab is not better than a non-Arab, nor is a non-Arab better than an Arab, except on the basis of *taqwa*. Allah says: "*O Mankind, We created you from a male and female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you might come to know each other. The noblest among you in Allah's sight is the most godfearing.*" (49:13)

The Seal of the Messengers said, "If a person calls to tribalism, he is not one of us; if a person fights for tribalism, he is not one of us; and if a person dies for tribalism, he is not one of us." (Abu Dawud) He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, also said told who praised the Ansar and praised the Muhajirun, "Do not do that, for it will cause civil unrest."

The creed of this civilisation is based upon *tawhid*; its society upon respect of people's rights and equality between citizens; its conduct upon *taqwa*, modesty and humility; its efforts upon striving for the Next World and *jihad* in the Way of Allah; its wars are fought with compassion and humanity; and its governments place more emphasis on guidance than tax-collecting, and on serving

people rather than exploiting them. Throughout history, this noble civilisation has rendered a great service to humanity and kept it safe from the talons and tyranny of the *Jahiliyya*. This civilisation is known throughout the world for the lasting legacy that it has left behind.

This civilisation has been so coloured by the dye of Allah and belief in Allah has been so impressed upon it, that it has become an integral part of its identity and it is no longer possible to strip that away from it.

The behaviour of young men

Salama ibn al-Akwa', may Allah be pleased with him, said, "The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, passed by a group of young men, who had become Muslim, engaging in an archery contest. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said to them, 'Shoot, sons of Isma'il, for your forefather (Isma'il) was an archer. Shoot, and I will be with so-and-so. But one of the two teams stopped shooting, so the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asked them, 'What has made you stop shooting?' They replied, 'How can we shoot when you are with them?' The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'Shoot, for I am with all of you.'"

People used to seek *baraka* by carrying some of the Prophet's relics

According to the author of the *Shifa'*: "Some of his hairs were in the cap of Khalid ibn al-Walid. Khalid never once fought a battle wearing that cap without being granted victory."

The cap of Khalid ibn al-Walid contained some hairs from the head of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. During one of his battles, the cap fell from his head, so he launched a forceful attack against the enemy to recover it. Some of the Companions of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, were with him and criticised him for the large number of people who were killed in the battle on its account. He replied, "I did not do it because of the cap, but on

account of the hairs of the Prophet that were inside it. I did not want its *baraka* to be plundered, or for the idolaters to get their hands on it."

'Umar was seen placing his hand on the spot where the Prophet, peace be upon him, sat on the *minbar*, and then wiping that hand on his face. For a similar reason Malik, may Allah have mercy on him, would not ride any mount within Madina and used to say, "I would feel great shame before Allah if the hoof of my animal trod on ground in which the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is buried."

Asma' bint Abi Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, related that she brought out a long robe and said, "The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to wear this cloak, so we use it to heal the sick."

Al-Qasim ibn al-Ma'mun said, "We had a bowl that had belonged to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. We used to put water in it, and the sick would drink from it in order to be cured." (*ash-Shifa'*)

Ibn Sirin said, "I said to 'Abida, 'We have a hair of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, which we got from Anas or from his family.' Thereupon he said, 'That I have a hair from his head is more beloved to me than this world and everything in it.'"

Ibn Sirin related from Anas that when the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, shaved his head, the first person to take some of his hair was Abu Talha.

Intense love for things used by the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace

The Companion's love of seeking *baraka* by the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, reached extraordinary degrees. 'Awn ibn Abi Juhayfa related that his father had said: "I saw the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in a red leather tent and I saw Bilal take the left-over *wudu'* water of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. Then I saw people racing one another to get some of that *wudu'* water. Those who managed to get some

rubbed it upon themselves, and those who did not took it from moisture still left on the hands of their companions.”

They bring their vessels to him

Anas ibn Malik said: “After the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, prayed the morning prayer, the servants of Madina would bring their vessels to him full of water and he would dip his hand into every vessel. Even when it was very cold in the morning, they brought their vessels to him.” (Muslim)

Anas related that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “None of you is truly a believer until he loves me more than his father, his son and everyone else.” (al-Bukhari)

Have you heard the story of the bell of Umm Salama? ‘Uthman ibn Mawhib said, “Umm Salama used to have a large silver bell in which she used to keep some of the hair of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. Whenever anyone was afflicted by fever, he would send a vessel to her containing water. She would then take out the hairs and move them about in the water, which the sick man would then sprinkle upon himself. My family sent me to her. She brought out the bell, and I saw that it was ‘so big’ (the narrator indicated that this meant three finger-widths) and that were some red hairs in it.” (al-Bukhari)

Abu Juhayfa said: “The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, came out to us in the midday heat. Some water was brought to him and he performed *wudu*’. After he had finished, people took what was left of his *wudu*’ water and started wiping themselves with it.”

‘Urwa related that whenever the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, performed *wudu*’, people would almost come to blows in their attempt to get some of the water left over from his *wudu*’.

‘Uqba ibn ‘Amir related that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, went out one day and prayed over the people of Uhud the prayer for the dead. Then he went to stand on the *minbar* and said: “I will go ahead to prepare things for you and will be a witness for you. By Allah, I am looking at my Basin at this

very moment and I have been given the keys to the treasure-houses of the world. By Allah, I do not fear that you will associate anything with Allah after I have gone, but I do fear that you will fight one another for the sake of the treasure of the world." (al-Bukhari)

Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "My heirs will not distribute a single *dinar* amongst themselves. Everything that I leave – after the maintenance payments due to my wives and slaves have been paid – is *sadaqa*."

' Amr ibn al-Harith, the brother-in-law of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and the brother of Juwayriyya bint al-Harith, said, "When the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, died, he did not leave a single *dirham*, *dinar*, slave, slave-girl or anything else behind, except for his white camel, weapon and some land, which were all given as *sadaqa*."

Abu Burda said, "'A'isha, may Allah be pleased with her, brought out a felt garment and said, "The soul of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was taken while he was wearing this garment." Sulayman related another version from Abu Burda in which he said, "'A'isha brought out a thick shawl like the ones they make in Yemen and a garment of the material they call 'felt'." (al-Bukhari)

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: "I will be the first person to be resurrected. I will be people's spokesman when they come into His Presence and I will be the one who gives them the good news when they despair. The Banner of Praise will be in my hand; and I am the most noble of the sons of Adam in the sight of my Lord – and that is no boast." (*ash-Shifa'*)

Anas ibn Malik said: "The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was the most handsome of men, the most generous and the most courageous. One night the people were startled and terrified by an ominous sound. They went out in the direction of the sound and found that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had preceded them and ascertained that the sound was harmless. He was riding one of the horses of Abu Talha bareback with a sword strapped to his back, and saying,

'Do not be alarmed! Do not be alarmed! We found that the horse was like the sea (i.e. it was very fast).' Hammad related that Thabit said to him, "That horse was never out-run after that although it had previously been a slow horse." (al-Bukhari)

'Ali ibn Abi Talib, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "In the heat of battle, when the fighting was at its most intense, we were afraid for the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, as there was none closer than him to the enemy lines. On the Day of Badr we kept close to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, but he was the closest of us to the enemy and was the bravest man amongst us on that day." It is said that only brave men remained close to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, when the enemy grew near, as he was so close to them. (*ash-Shifa'*)

It is mentioned in the *Tafsir* of one of the scholars of the righteous generations that the meaning of Allah's Command, "*So fight in the way of Allah – you are only answerable for yourself – and spur on the believers.*" (4:83), was that it was forbidden for the Messenger of Allah to flee from the idolaters on the battlefield – even if he had been on his own – as is indicated by "*You are only answerable for yourself.*"

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was one of the bravest, most patient and most steadfast of people. He never once fled from the enemy lines, even when his Companions did. One of his Companions said, "When the fighting grew intense and people became influenced by battle fever, we used to seek the protection of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace."

On the day of Badr, he threw a handful of pebbles at the one thousand idolaters opposing them and said, "May their faces be disfigured," thus causing the foe to be routed.

Then on the day of Uhud, most of his Companions fled, while he remained in the frontline and did not flinch. Only twelve of his Companions remained with him, and seven of those were killed, leaving only five. At that moment, he killed Ubayy ibn Khalaf, may Allah curse him, and hurried him on his way to the Fire.

On the day of Hunayn, there were twelve thousand men in the

Muslim army; but they all fled except for the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, who remained firm, and one hundred or so of his Companions. On that day he was riding his white camel. He charged towards the enemy on its back, shouting out, "I am the Prophet and that is no lie! I am the son of 'Abdu'l-Muttalib!" Out of fear for the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, al-'Abbas, 'Ali and Abu Sufyan ibn al-Harith all seized hold of his camel in order to slow down its progress.

He continued like that until Allah gave him victory.

Unrivalled Texts

When going to bed

Al-Bara' ibn 'Azib related that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: "Whenever you go to bed, do *wudu*' as you do *wudu*' for the prayer, lie down on your right side, then say, 'O Allah, I have surrendered myself to You, entrusted my destiny to You, and relied on You in hope and fear of You. There is no refuge or rescue from You except in You. O Allah, I have faith in Your Book which You sent down and Your Prophet whom You sent.' If you die that night, then you will be in a state of the natural form (*fitra*). Make these the last words that you speak.' I recited back this supplication to the Prophet; but after 'Your Book which You sent down' I said 'Your Messenger', and he corrected me by saying, 'No, it is 'Your Prophet whom You sent.'"

One of the supplications of the Prophet was: "O Allah, I ask You for mercy by which my heart will be guided, my scattered affairs joined together, my muddled affairs put straight, my unseen part put right and the part of me that is visible elevated, and my actions purified; I ask You for mercy by which I will be inspired to right guidance, my intimacy will be returned and I will be protected from every evil. O Allah, I ask you for a good outcome in what is decreed, the hospitality that is given martyrs, the life of the blissful, and victory over my enemies." (*ash-Shifa'*)

Prophet and worshipper

He became accustomed to devotion, worship and retreat in his childhood, and that is the way of the noble few.

When guidance took root in his heart, his limbs became active in preparedness.

The first verse that was revealed in the Noble Qur'an was *"Read in the Name of your Lord, Who created."* (96:1) This verse contains an all-comprehensive directive. Although the only thing mentioned in the verse is reading, all other forms of action and inaction should be understood from it. The verse instructs us that whatever we do or leave undone, we should do it in the Name of our Lord. This understanding of the verse became clearer as time went by and further verses were revealed. Allah says: *"Say, 'My prayer and my rites, my living and my dying, are for Allah alone, the Lord of all the worlds, Who has no partner. I am commanded to be like that and I am the first of the Muslims.'" (6:164-165)*

The command is even more all-encompassing than this, if that is possible. Allah says in the Qur'an *"I created jinn and man only to worship Me."* (51:56). Therefore the objective of creation is worship, the reason for creation is worship, and the fruit, which every human being must try to pluck is worship. But if worship is man's *raison d'être* then we need directions to tell us how to do it, and we find these in the Qur'an.

"Establish the prayer from the time the sun declines until the darkening of the night, and also the recitation at dawn. The dawn recitation is certainly witnessed. And stay awake for prayer during part of the night as a supererogatory action for yourself. It may well be that your Lord will raise you to a Praiseworthy Station. Say: 'My Lord, make my entry sincere and make my leaving sincere, and grant me supporting authority direct from Your Presence.'" (17:78-80)

"But prostrate and draw near." (96:20)

"And worship your Lord until what is Certain comes to you." (15:99)

"So wait steadfastly for the judgement of your Lord – you are certainly before Our eyes. And glorify and praise your Lord when you rise; and glorify Him in the night and when the stars fade." (52:46-47)

It is beyond doubt that Allah, glory be to Him, is neither harmed by disobedience nor increased by obedience, for He is the One Who is Rich beyond need and the One Who gives without

limit. He, glory be to Him, is the Provider and the One Who enriches. He is the absolutely Self-Sufficient and everything other than Him is in need.

Worship is only prescribed for man so that he may be completed and perfected. It is a great bounty from Allah to His slaves that He opens for them the door to perfection and guides them to worship. A man benefits both in this world and the Next from worship, as Allah indicates when He says: *"Whoever acts rightly, male or female, being a believer, We will give them a good life and We will recompense them according to the best of what they did."* (16:97)

A sign of Allah's concern for the Islamic Community and His Noble Messenger is that the first thing that He revealed in His final Message was a command to them to let them know that every action they did was an act of worship for every single little thing done in the Name of Allah is worship, even if it is only eating or drinking.

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, responded to this command and took it on and continued to do so throughout his entire life. He made every part of his life an act of worship and did not do anything except in the Name of Allah. He made everything for Allah: his prayer, rites, entire life and even his death. For Allah's sake, he spoke and was silent, moved and was still, slept and remained awake; he worshipped Allah even with his breaths. He turned to Allah in everything and worshipped Him in every instant. It was this that made the Prophet the first of the Muslims; and indeed he has been the first of them since the dawn of creation, for the *Deen* in the insight of Allah is, and has always been, Islam.

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, made his life one continuous act of worship. And it follows that if a person's life has been transformed into worship, then his life has also been transformed into strength. Do you not see that if *jihad* is made worship, work is made worship, knowledge is made worship, struggle is made worship and making a living is made worship, then it would be impossible for such a society to be weak? The people of such a society would be safe and fortunate.

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him

peace, responded wholeheartedly to Allah's command to worship, as we have already said; and Allah acknowledges this response when He addresses him in the Noble Qur'an, saying: "*Your Lord knows that you stay up nearly two-thirds of the night – or half of it, or a third of it.*" (73:18)

We now intend to mention a few *hadiths* to illustrate this aspect of the life of the Messenger of Allah. Our reasons for doing so are several:

Firstly, so that people may read them and strive to the best of their ability to follow his example.

Secondly, to provide hearts with spiritual succour, for there is no treatment for doubt, hesitation and bewildering that is anywhere near as valuable as worship. Experience has taught us that the best piece of advice one can give to someone suffering from doubt is to tell him to pray, for prayer is the most effective cure for all sorts of psychological and religious turmoil. Furthermore, if one is able to bring tranquility to his soul (and the only way of doing that is by worship), then many forms of physical illness will also vanish and he will be less susceptible to disease. This fact is attested to by doctors and physicians.

Thirdly, to provide relief from material concerns; for taking the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, as an example is the means of doing so. Allah says: "*If only the people of the cities had had faith and been godfearing, We would have opened up to them blessings from heaven and earth.*" (7:95) He also says: "*Whoever acts rightly, male or female, being a believer, We will give them a good life and We will recompense them according to the best of what they did.*" (16:97)

Not one of the *hadiths* that follow, from here until the end of the book, will be weak; and we have made great efforts to ensure it, even though it is permitted to take rulings from weak *hadiths* when it comes to supererogatory good actions and supererogatory acts of worship.

Prayer

'A'isha, may Allah be pleased with her, said that "The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to stand in prayer during the night for so long that his feet became swollen and cracked. I asked him, 'Why do you do this, Messenger of Allah, when Allah has already forgiven you for everything you have done and everything you will do?' He said, 'Should I not be a thankful slave?'"

'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "I prayed with the Prophet during the nighttime and he stood for so long that I considered doing something evil. He was asked, 'What did you consider doing?' He said, 'Sitting down and leaving the standing part of the prayer.'"

Perhaps Ibn Mas'ud had a valid excuse for this, because the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to recite, for example, *Suratu'l-Baqara* in the first *rak'at*, *Surat Al 'Imran* in the second, *Suratu'n-Nisa'* in the third, and so on. He used to stand for a very long time, bow for a very long time, and prostrate for a very long time. That is what he did when he prayed on his own in the middle of the night. But when praying with other people, he used to shorten each part of the prayer to make it easier for them.

In the *Sahih* Collections, the fact that the Messenger of Allah recited for a very long time in the *rak'ats* he prayed during the night is transmitted. That is the reason why there were never more than eleven *rak'ats* in his nightly vigil, as is related by 'A'isha, may Allah be pleased with her. She said: "The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to pray eleven *rak'ats* during the night and then, at the crack of dawn, would pray two quick *rak'ats*. Then he would lie down on his right side until the *mu'adhdhin* gave the call to prayer."

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, filled his night with prayer and would weep while doing so.

Mutarraf ibn 'Abdullah related that his father said, "I came to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, while he was praying and from inside him came a sound like the simmering of a cooking pot (in other words, he was crying)."

The prayer is the most important thing a person can do, and

this was made clear by the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, when he said, "The prayer is all that lies between a man and his entering into unbelief and *shirk*."

The Prophet, peace be upon him, used to perform *wudu*' for every prayer, as Anas ibn Malik related. He said, may Allah be pleased with him, "The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to perform *wudu*' for every prayer." He was asked, "What did you all used to do?" He replied, "Most of us used to make do with one *wudu*', so long as we did not break it."

The following *hadiths* show some of the things that the Messenger used to do in the prayer and at the time of the prayer:

"During the *iqama*, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, would say, 'Allah has established it and made it eternal'."

"The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, would bow his head when he stood up to pray."

'Aisha, may Allah be pleased with her, said, "The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was never so regular in any of the supererogatory prayers as he was in the two *rak'ats* before *Fajr*."

Sammak ibn Harb said, "I asked Jabir ibn Samura, 'Did you use to sit with the Messenger of Allah?' He replied, 'Yes, I sat with him a lot. He would not leave the place in which he had prayed *Subh* until the sun had risen. When the sun rose, he would also rise.' The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, would begin the prayer intending to make it a long one, but would then hear the wail of an infant and shorten that prayer so as to not make it difficult for the child's mother."

"The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to recite *Suratu'l-Jumu'a* in the first *rak'at* and *Suratu'l-Munafiqun* in the second."

Jubayr ibn Mut'im said, "I heard the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, recite *Suratu't-Tur* in the *Maghrib* prayer. He also used to recite *Suratu'l-Mursalat* in *Maghrib*. That is the last thing I heard the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, recite."

Umm Hashim bint Haritha ibn an-Nu'man said, "I learnt *Qaf*,

wa'l-Qur'ani'l-Majid directly from the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, for he used to recite it upon the *minbar* every *Jumu'a*."

"The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to recite *Suratu's-Sajda* and *Suratu'l-Insan* in the *Subh* prayer on the day of *Jumu'a*. (al-Bukhari and Muslim from the *hadith* of Abu Hurayra. He added that he used to recite the whole *suras*, as reciting only part of a *sura* goes against the *Summa*)."

"The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to recite *Suratu'l-A'la'* and *Suratu'l-Ghashiya* in the two '*Id* prayers and the *Subh* prayer."

"He, peace be upon him, used to say *Subhanaka'llahumma Rabbana wa bihamdika, Allahumma'ghfir li* ('Glory be to You, Allah, our Lord, by Your praise. O Allah, forgive me') a lot in his bows and prostrations."

"He, peace be upon him, used to say *Allahumma'ghfir li ma qaddamtu wa ma akbkhartu, wa ma asrartu wa ma a'lantu, wa ma asraftu wa ma Anta a'lamu bihi minni. Anta'l-Muqaddim wa Anta'l-Mu'akkbhir. La ilaha illa Anta* ('O Allah forgive me what I have done before and what I do in the future; what I have concealed and what I have done openly; and what I have been profligate in and what You know better than I do about. You are the One Who brings things forward and the One Who delays things. There is no god but You') after saying the *tashabbud* and before saying the *salam* (to conclude the prayer)."

"In prostration, he, peace be upon him, would say, *Allahumma inni a'udhu bi-ridaka min sakhatik, wa bi-mu'afatika min 'uqubatik, wa a'udhu bika minka wa la uhsi thana'an 'alayk. Anta kama athnayta 'ala nafsik* ('O Allah, I seek protection in Your Pleasure from Your Anger, and in Your Pardon from Your Punishment. I seek refuge in You from You. I cannot enumerate Your praises as You are; You have praised Yourself')."

Hudhayfa related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to say in his bowing, *Subhana Rabbiya'l-'Adhim* ('Glory be to my Lord, most Immense'), and in his prostration, *Subhana Rabbiya'l-A'la'* ('Glory be to my Lord, most High').

'A'isha, may Allah be pleased with her, related that the

Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in his bowing and prostration, often used to say a lot, *Subhanaka'llahumma wa bi-hamdika, Allahumma'ghfir li* ('Glory be to You, Allah, by Your Praise. O Allah, forgive me'), following the instructions of the Quran." For Allah says in the Qur'an, "*Then glorify your Lord's praise and ask His forgiveness. He is Ever-Relenting.*" (110:3)

Fasting

The following *hadiths* concern a different type of worship, and that is fasting, whether within Ramadan or not. These *hadiths*, just like those we quoted about the prayer, only focus on certain instances and do not give us a complete picture. None-theless, they provide us with enough indications for our purposes here.

Fasting the month of Ramadan was made obligatory in the second year after the *Hijra*. When the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, passed away, he had fasted nine Ramadans.

'A'isha, may Allah be pleased with her, said: "When the last ten nights of Ramadan began, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, would spend the night in prayer (literally, "bring the night to life"). He would wake up his family, and do everything with renewed vigour and intensity."

'A'isha, may Allah be pleased with her, said, "The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, would exert himself more in performing acts of worship in Ramadan than at any other time, and more in the last ten days of Ramadan than in the rest of the month."

"He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to spend the last ten days of Ramadan in *i'tikaf* every year until he passed away."

"The Prophet would spend ten days in *i'tikaf* every Ramadan. In the year that he died, he spent twenty days in *i'tikaf*."

"When the last ten days of Ramadan began, he would fold away his bed, isolate himself from women, cleanse himself between the two *adhans* (i.e fill the time between 'Isha' and Subh

with prayer and *dhikr*), and make his dinner his *subur*.

Ibn 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with them both, said, "The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to fast continuously (*wisal*) and so people fasted continuously, copying him in that; but it was hard for them, so he forbade them to do it. They said to him, 'But you fast continuously.' He said, 'I am not the same as you. I am fed and given drink.'" (al-Bukhari)

Ibn 'Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, would not break his fast during the days of the full moon, regardless of whether he was travelling or at home. The days of the full moon are the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth of the month."

Hafsa, may Allah be pleased with her, said, "There were four things the Prophet never left off doing: fasting the day of 'Ashura', fasting the ninth day of *Dhu'l-Hijja* (the day of 'Arafa), fasting the days of the full moon every month, and praying the two *rak'ats* before *Fajr*."

"He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to take care to fast every Monday and Thursday."

"The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to fast three days at the beginning of every month."

Dhikr

Another type of worship is *dhikr*.

"The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, 'No people sit down making *dhikr* of Allah but angels surround them, mercy engulfs them, tranquility descends upon them and Allah mentions them to those angels who are with Him.'" (Muslim and Ahmad)

'A'isha said, may Allah be pleased with her: "He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, would remember Allah (make *dhikr* of Allah) in every moment."

"The likeness of the one who makes *dhikr* and the one who does not is that of a living man and that of a dead man."

"Whoever reads one letter from Allah's Book receives a good action, and one good action receives ten like it. I do not say that *Alif Lam Mim* is one letter; rather I say that *Alif* is a letter, *Lam* is a

letter and *Mim* is a letter.”

“Whoever does not have any of the Qur’an inside him is like a ruined house.”

“Recite the Qur’an, for on the Day of Rising it will be an intercessor for you.”

“While Jibril, peace be upon him, was sitting with the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, he heard a cracking sound coming from above him. He raised his head and said, ‘This is a gateway to Heaven that is open today, has never been opened before, and never will be opened again.’ An angel descended through the gateway, whereupon Jibril said, ‘This is an angel who has never once descended to the earth except for today.’ The angel greeted the Prophet and said, ‘I bring the good of two lights which have been bestowed upon you, and have never before been bestowed upon any other Prophet: they are the *Fatiba* and the final verses of *Suratu’l-Baqara*. You will not recite with any letter from them without being given what you have asked for.’”

Because *La ilaha illa-llah* (‘There is no god but Allah’) is the basis of *tawhid* and the expression of it, and because it is mentioned many times in the Qur’an – both in those exact words and in other words that have the same meaning (such as *la ilaha illa Anta*, and so on) – the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “The best form of *dhikr* is *La ilaha illa’Llah* (‘there is no god but Allah’).”

Abu Musa, may Allah be pleased with him, said: “The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asked, ‘Should I not tell you of one of the treasures of the Garden?’ I replied, ‘Yes, Messenger of Allah.’ He said, peace be upon him: ‘*La hawla wa la quwwata illa billah*’ (‘There is no strength and no power except by Allah’).”

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “I met Ibrahim, peace be upon him, on the night of the Ascent. He said, ‘Muhammad, give my greetings to your community, and tell them that the soil of the Garden is wholesome, its water sweet and its valleys fertile, and that the seed that cultivates it is *Subhana’llahi wa’l-hamdu li-llahi wa la ilaha illa’Llahu wa’llahu Akbar*’ (‘Glory be to Allah and Praise be to Allah. There is no god

but Allah and Allah is Great').”

He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to shout at the top of his voice, “*La ilaha illa-llahu wahdahu la sharika lah, labu’l-mulku wa labu’l-hamdu wa Huwa ‘ala kulli shay’in qadir. La hawla wa la quwwata illa bi’llah. La ilaha illa’llahu wa la na’budu illa iyyah. Labu’n-ni‘matu wa labu’l-fadlu wa labu’tb-thana’u’l-hasanu’l-jamil. La ilaha illa’Llahu mukhlisin, labu’d-dina wa law kariha’l-kafirun*” (‘There is no god but Allah One without partner. To Him belongs the Kingdom and to Him belongs Praise, and He has power over all things. There is no strength and no power except by Allah. There is no god but Allah and we do not worship any other than Him. All blessings and favours are from Him and He has the best and most beautiful praise; there is no god but Allah. We make the *Deen* sincerely His, even if the unbelievers hate it’).”

He said, may Allah bless him and grant him peace: “If a person says, *La ilaha illa’Llahu wahdahu la sharika lah, labu’l-mulku wa labu’l-hamdu wa Huwa ‘ala kulli shay’in qadir* (‘There is no god but Allah One without partner. To Him belongs the Kingdom and to Him belongs Praise, and He has power over all things’) one hundred times every day, he will have a reward the equivalent of ten camels, one hundred good actions will be recorded for him, one hundred wrong actions will be wiped away, and he will be protected from Shaytan for the whole day until the evening. No one has brought anything better than that upon himself, except for someone who does more than that.”

He said, peace be upon him: “If a person says *Subhana-llahi wa bi-hamdihi* (‘Glory be to Allah by His Praise’), one hundred times in a day, his wrong actions will be decreased, even if they as numerous as the froth of the ocean.”

He said, may Allah bless him and grant him peace: “If a person enters his home and makes mention of Allah upon entering and when he sits down to eat his food, Shaytan will say to his companions, ‘You will have no place to spend the night and no supper.’ If a person enters his home and does not make *dhikr* of Allah upon entering, Shaytan will say to his companions, ‘You have found a place to spend the night;’ and if he does not make *dhikr* upon eating, Shaytan will say, ‘You have found a place to spend the night

and have your supper.”

He said, peace be upon him: “Cleanliness (Purity) is half of faith, saying *al-Hamdu lillah* (‘Praise belongs to Allah’) fills up the scales, and saying *Subhana’Llahi wa’l-hamdu li’Llah* (‘Glory be to Allah and Praise be to Allah’) fills up what is between the heavens and the earth. Prayer is a light, *sadaqa* is a proof, patience is illumination, and the Qur’an is a proof either for you or against you.”

He said, peace be upon him: “The most beloved speech with Allah is *Subhana’Llahi wa bi-hamdihi* (‘Glory be to Allah by His Praise’).”

He said, peace be upon him: “That I say, *Subhana’Llahi wa’l-hamdu li’Llahi wa la ilaha illa’Llahu wa’Llahu akbar* (‘Glory be to Allah and Praise be to Allah. There is no god but Allah and Allah is Great’) is dearer to me than everything over which the sun has risen.”

He said, may Allah bless him and grant him peace: “Two phrases are light on the tongue, heavy in the balance and beloved to the All-Meriful: *Subhana’Llahi wa bi-hamdihi* (‘Glory be to Allah by His Praise’) and *Subhana’Llahi’l-’Adhim* (‘Glory be to Allah, the Immense’).”

***Du’a* (Supplication)**

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “Supplication is worship.” As for the best times in which to make supplication, there are many *hadiths* in this regard and we will mention some of them here.

“The slave is closest to his Lord when he is in prostration, so supplicate much while you are prostrating.”

“The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was asked, ‘Which supplications are most heard?’ He replied, ‘Those made in the middle of the night and immediately after the obligatory prayers.’”

“The supplication of a Muslim for his brother in Islam, in his absence, is answered. There is an angel beside his head who has been entrusted with the task of saying ‘*Amin*, and the same for you,’ every time he asks for good for his fellow Muslim.”

“A slave of Allah continues to have his supplications answered,

so long as he does not ask for something sinful or for breaking the ties of kinship, and so long as he does not try to hasten the answer." He was asked, "Messenger of Allah, what do you mean by 'try to hasten'?" He replied, "For a man to say, 'I have made my supplication but seen no sign of an answer', so that he gives up hope and stops making supplication."

"There is no Muslim on the face of the earth who asks Allah for something without Allah either granting that to him or turning away from him an evil of the same degree, so long as he does not ask for something sinful or for breaking the ties of kinship." A man said, "Then we will supplicate a lot." He replied, "Allah is more."

He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, loved comprehensive supplications (supplications which combine more than one request). Examples of these include the Prophetic supplications mentioned below:

"A man came to him and asked, 'Messenger of Allah, what should I say when I supplicate to my Lord?' He replied, 'Say, "O Allah, forgive me, have mercy on me, give me good health, and give me provision",¹ – for these supplications combine your needs in this world and the Next."

He, peace be upon him, said, "O Allah, I ask you for that which necessitates Your mercy and invites Your forgiveness; I ask You that I be safe from committing any sin, and gain the spoils from every good action; I ask You that I attain Paradise and be saved from the Fire."²

Abu Umama, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, made many supplications that we did not memorise. I mentioned this fact to him, and he said, 'Should I not tell you of something which will combine all of those supplications? Say, 'O Allah, we ask You for the best of what Your Prophet Muhammad asked You and seek refuge in You from the worst of what Your Prophet

1. *Allahumma'ghfir li wa'rhamni wa'rzuqni.*

2. *Allahumma inni as'aluka mujibati rahmatik, wa 'aza'ima maghfiratik, wa'salamata min kulli ithm, wa'l-ghanimata min kulli birr, wa'l-fawza bi'l-janna, wa'n-najata mina'n-nar.*

Muhammad sought refuge in You. You are One Whose Help is sought and You we tell of our problems. There is no strength and no power except by You.”¹

He said, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: “O Allah, I seek refuge in You from reprehensible attributes, actions and desires.”²

He said, peace be upon him, said: “*Allahumma alhimni rushdi wa a'idhni min sharri nafsi* ('O Allah, inspire me to right guidance, and give me refuge from the evil of my self').”

Shahr ibn Hawshab said: “I asked Umm Salama, may Allah be pleased with her, ‘O Mother of the Believers, what supplication did the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, make most when he was with you?’ She answered, ‘The supplication he made the most was, *Ya muqalliba'l-qulubi thabbit qalbi 'ala dinik* ('O One Who turns all hearts around, make my heart firm upon Your *Deen*').”

He said, peace be upon him, said: “O Allah, put a light in my heart, a light in my eyes, a light in my ears, a light on my right-hand side, a light on my left-hand side, a light below me and a light above me. Grant me a light.”³

He said, peace be upon him: “*Rabbana atina fi'd-dunya hasanatan wa fi'l-akhirati hasanatan wa qina 'adhaba'n-nar* ('Our Lord, give us good in this world, and good in the Next World, and safeguard us from the punishment of the Fire').”

Supplication during the Prayer

Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, related that he said to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, “Teach me a supplication which I can make in my prayer.”

1. *Allahumma inna nas'aluka min khayr; ma sa'alaka Nabiyyuka Muhammad, wa na'udhu bika min sharri ma-sta'adhaka minhu Nabiyyuka Muhammad, wa anta'l-Musta'anu wa 'alayka'l-balagh, wa la hawla wa la quwwata illa bik.*

2. *Allahumma inni a'udhu bika min munkarati'l-akhlaki wa'l-a'mali wa'l-ahwa.*

3. *Allahumma j'al fi qalbi nuran, wa fi basari nuran, wa fi sam'i nuran, wa 'an yamini nuran, wa 'an yasari nuran, wa tahti nuran, wa amami nuran, wa khalfi nuran, wa j'al li nura.*

He replied, "Say *Allahumma inni dhalamtu nafsi dhulman kathiran, wa la yaghfiru'dh'dhunuba illa Ant, fa'ghfir li maghfiratan min 'indi - ka wa-rhamni. Innaka Anta'l-Ghafuru'r-Rahim* ('O Allah, I have wronged myself greatly and no one forgives sins except for You, so forgive me and have mercy on me. You are the Ever-Forgiving, Most-Merciful')."

He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to say between the two prostrations, "*Allahumma'ghfir li wa'rhamni wa'hdini wa 'afini wa'rzuqni* ('O Allah, forgive me, have mercy on me, guide me, give me health and provide for me')."

Mu'adh, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, took him by the hand and said: "Mu'adh, by Allah, I love you and want to give you some advice. Mu'adh, immediately after each of the obligatory prayers, do not forget to say, '*Allahumma a'inni 'ala dhikrik wa shukrika wa husni 'ibadatik* ('O Allah, help me to remember You, thank You and worship You well')."

Upon breaking one's fast

He said, peace be upon him: "*al-Hamdu li'Llahi'l'ladhi a'anani fa-sumtu wa razaqani fa-aftart* ('Praise belongs to Allah Who gave me help so that I could fast and provided for me so that I could break my fast')."

He said, peace be upon him: "*Allahumma laka sumtu wa 'ala rizqika aftartu fa-taqabbal minni, innaka Anta's-Sami'u-l-'Alim* ('O Allah, I fasted for You and broke my fast with that which you provided for me, so accept my fast from me. You are the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing')."

In time of sorrow and calamity

He said, may Allah bless him and grant him peace: "*Ya Hayyu ya Qayyum, bi-rahmatika astaghith* ('O Living, O Self-Sustaining, by Your Mercy, I ask You for help')."

He said, peace be upon him: "*La ilaha illa'Llahu'l-'Adhimu'l-Halim, la ilaha illa'Llahu Rabbu's-samawati wa Rabbu'l-ardi Rabbu'l-'Arshi'l-Karim* ('There is no god but Allah, the Immense, the

Forebearing. There is no god but Allah, Lord of the heavens, Lord of the earth and Lord of the Noble Throne’).”

When the misfortune and sorrow is very severe, a very good supplication is the one the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, made when he returned from Ta’if, and anyone undergoing hardships should keep repeating it until his sorrows are dispelled. He said, may Allah bless him and grant him peace: “O Allah, to You I complain of my weakness, my lack of resource, and my disgrace at the hands of these people. O Most Merciful of the merciful, You are the Lord of the weak and You are my Lord, so to whom shall You entrust me? To one afar who shall frown upon me, or to an enemy You have given power over me? If You are not angry with me then I do not care, as Your good will is more important to me. I take refuge in the Light of Your Face – by which You have lit up the darkness and caused the affairs of this world and the Next to be conducted in a correct manner – from Your anger or wrath descending upon me. It is for You to grant favour when You are pleased to do so. There is no power and no strength except by You.”¹

Fear of people

If he, peace be upon him, feared people, he would say, “*Allahumma inna naj’aluka fi nuhurihim wa na’udhu bika min shururihim* (‘O Allah, we place You upon our necks and seek refuge in You from their evil’).”

Paying off debts

“Should I not teach some words that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, taught me? By these words, even if you were to have a debt the size of a mountain,

1. *Allahumma ilayka ashku da’fa quwwati wa qillata hilati wa hawani ‘ala’n-nas. Ya Ahhama’r-Rabimin, Anta Rabbu’l-mustad’afin wa Anta Rabbi. Ila man takilni, wa ila ba’idin yatajabhamuni am ila ‘aduwwin mallaktabu amri. In lam yakun bika ‘alayya ghadabun fala ubali wa lakinna ‘afiyataka hiya awsa’u li, a’udhu bi-nuri wajbika’l-ladhi ashraqta labu’dh-dhulumat wa saluba ‘alaybi amra’d-dunya wa’l-akhirati min an tanzila bi ghadabuka aw yahilla ‘alayya sakhatuka. Laka’l-’utba hatta tarda, wa la hawla wa la quwwata illa bik.*

Allah would discharge it for you. Say, *Allahumma'kfini bi halalika 'an haramika wa'ghnini bi-fadlika 'amman siwak* ('O Allah, protect me by what You have made lawful from what You have made unlawful and free me, by Your Bounty, of need for anyone but You')."

When leaving home

Anas ibn Malik, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: "If a person says *Bismi'Llahi, tawakkaltu 'ala'Llahi, la hawla wa la quwwata illa bi'Llah* ('In the Name of Allah, I rely upon Allah. There is no strength and no power except by Allah'), he will be told, 'You have been guided, guarded and protected', and Shaytan will be kept well away from him."

Upon sleeping and waking up

He, peace be upon him, said, "When any of you goes to bed and lies down to sleep, he should place his hand under his cheek and say, *Allahumma bismika amutu wa ahyā* ('O Allah, in Your Name I die and I live'), and when he wakes up, he should say, *al-Hamdu li'Llah'l-ladhi ahyana ba'da ma amatana wa ilayhi'n-nushur* ('Praise belongs to Allah Who has restored me to life after taking my soul; and the Resurrection is to Him')."

When eating

He said, peace be upon him: "*al-Hamdu li'Llahi'l-ladhi at'amani hadha wa razaqanihi min ghayri hawlin minni wa la quwwa* ('Praise belongs to Allah Who gave me this food and gave me provision without any strength or power from me')."

When putting on new clothes

He prayed, peace be upon him: "*Allahumma laka'l-hamd. Anta kasawtanihi, as'aluka khayrahu wa khayr ma suni'a lah, wa a'udhu bika min sharrihi wa sharri ma suni'a lah* ('O Allah, praise belongs

to You, for You have clothed me with them. I ask You for the their goodness and the goodness for which they were made, and I seek refuge in You from their evil and the evil for which they were made’).”

Upon sighting the new moon

He prayed, peace be upon him: “*Allahumma abillahu ‘alayna bi’l-amni wa’l-iman, wa’s-salami wa’l-islam, Rabbi wa Rabbuka’l-Llah, hilala rushdin wa khayr* (‘O Allah, make this new moon find us in security and faith, and in peace and Islam. My Lord and your Lord is Allah, new moon of goodness and right guidance’).”

When an assembly comes to an end and those who attend -
ed go their separate ways

He said, peace be upon him, said: “*Subhanaka’Llahumma wa bihamdik, ashhadu an la ilaha illa Ant. Astaghfiruka wa atubu ilayk* (‘Glory be to You, O Allah by Your Praise. I bear witness that there is no god but You. I ask Your forgiveness and I repent to You’).”

Extract from *ar-Risala al-Muhammadiyah* by Sulayman an-Nadwi

“One of the best and most exalted aspects of the conduct of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was that after he had received revelation he did not once order his Companions and followers to do anything that he himself had not preceded them in doing. For example, he called upon people to love Allah and make *dhikr* of Him; but if you were had looked closely at him you would have seen that his own life was already harmonious with that call, because there was not a single hour of the night or day that passed except when we would not find him remembering Allah with his heart and praising Him with his tongue. His tongue was moist with the *dhikr* of Allah, and he did not let up from remembering Allah even for a single heartbeat. When he ate or drank, he mentioned the Name of Allah, and

when he finished he praised Allah; when he went to bed or woke up, he mentioned Allah; when he stood up or sat down, he glorified Allah or praised Him; and when he put on new clothes, he thanked Allah.

“His life was so full of these *dhikrs* and supplications that many of them were memorised by his Companions and they fill up a large part of the *Sahih Hadith* Collections. Many of them have been gathered together in the book *al-Hisn al-basin*, a comprehensive book of more than two hundred pages. If one were to read these supplications, he would be absolutely amazed and would be entirely certain that the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, loved Allah, feared Him and was in awe of His Majesty. His life exemplified Allah’s description of His righteous slaves – “those who remember Allah, standing, sitting and lying on their sides” (3:191) and he was, as ‘A’isha, may Allah be pleased with her, described him when she said, ‘He used to invoke *dhikr* of Allah and never once forgot to remember Him.’

He commanded people to perform the prayer and encouraged them to establish it and safeguard it. What do you think the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was himself doing when he commanded others to do this? He would establish the prayer and maintain it more than everyone else. The Muslims would establish the five obligatory prayers, while the Prophet established them and established various supererogatory prayers, such as the *Duha*, the *Ishraq* and *Tahajjud* prayers in addition. Most Muslims would pray seventeen *rak’ats* a day, while the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, would pray between fifty and sixty. The *tahajjud* prayers ceased to be obligatory when the five daily prayers were enjoined upon the Muslim Community, but the Messenger, peace be upon him, continued to stand in the night for such a long time that his feet would become swollen. One day, ‘A’isha, may Allah be pleased with her, seeing how much his body was suffering physically from his nightly vigils, said to him, ‘Allah has already forgiven you for everything you have done and everything you will do, so why do you tire yourself out so much in this way, Messenger of Allah?’ The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, replied,

‘Should I not be a thankful slave?’

During these prayers his love of Allah would dominate him more than his fear of Him, so he would bow for so long that anyone watching him might think that he had forgotten the prostration.

From the first few moments after he had begun to receive revelation, he would perform his prayers in front of the Ka’ba in full view of the idolaters who would act in a hostile fashion towards him and try to harm him. Indeed, some of them would physically attack him while he was praying, but he would not leave the prayer out of fear of them. His flanks shunned his bed, for he only slept a very short portion of the night. He would spend it in standing and prostration while other people slept.

The hardest time in which to establish the prayer is when the two armies are on the battlefield and battle has already been joined. But even at extreme times like that, the Prophet would seek to pray the prayers at the correct times. He would gather the Muslims into rows and would act as their *imam*. They would take turns behind him, half watching out for the enemy during the first half of the prayer and then praying the second half behind the *imam*, while those who had prayed the first half with the *imam* watched out for the enemy during the second half of the prayer. They did not let anything prevent them fulfilling their pact with Allah.

He commanded the Muslims to fast, but the only fast that was obligatory for them was Ramadan. The Messenger of Allah, however, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, did not let a week pass without him fasting. ‘A’isha said, ‘He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to fast until I thought that he would not break his fast.’

He used to forbid the Muslims to fast continuously, but would himself sometimes go two or three days without eating or drinking (and this is what is known as *wisal*). Some of the Companions wanted to follow his example in doing that, but he told them, ‘I am not like the rest of you, for I am fed and given drink.’

Sometimes he might even fast two months in succession, such as Sha‘ban and Ramadan. He also often fasted the days of the full moon (the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth of the lunar

month), six days of the month of Shawwal, the Day of 'Ashura' (10th of Muharram), and every Monday and Thursday. That was his custom when it came to fasting.

He ordered the Muslims to pay *zakat* and spend their wealth in good causes, but he did that himself first. You have the proof in Khadija's words to him when he first told her of the Revelation: 'You maintain your family ties, take on other people's burdens, give to the destitute, receive your guests with hospitality and help those who have been afflicted by calamity.' He did not order people to follow him in giving up the world, he did not tell them to sacrifice everything that they owned, and he did not say that the doors of Heaven would be slammed shut in the faces of the rich. He said none of these things; instead he instructed them to give some of their wealth as *sadaqa* and be as Allah describes them – "*And they give of what We have provided for them.*" (32:16)

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, did not hoard any wealth in his house – in fact, there was almost nothing he kept as a personal possession, for he used to spend everything that came to him in the Way of Allah. A fifth part of all the booty and spoils of war obtained by the Muslims came to him, but he did not even keep a small part of that for himself. He would give it all to the poor and destitute. Neither he nor any of his family enjoyed the luxuries of this world, for their portion of this world was poverty and abstinence.

It was his custom, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, after the land of Khaybar was conquered, to give each of his wives their year's allowance of food at the beginning of each year; but the food would always run out before the year had ended and his wives would be afflicted by hunger and deprivation, because the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, would give from that food to the poor and to his guests.

'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas, may Allah pleased with them both, said, 'He was the most generous of us and was at his most generous during Ramadan.' He never once in his whole life said 'no' to anyone when asked for something; and he did not eat anything on his own, even when it was very little, but always shared it with his Companions. He told his Companions: 'If a person dies in debt, I will take on his debt and pay it for him, and all of his estate can

then be shared amongst his heirs.'

One day a desert Arab came to him and said, 'Muhammad, This wealth does not belong to you or your father, so load up my camel for me with wealth.' The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, brought him barley and dates and did not become angry with him for the rude way in which he had been addressed. Then he said, 'I am merely someone who stores and distributes. It is Allah Who gives.'

Abu Dharr said: 'One day, I was walking with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in the lava tract of Madina when we found ourselves facing Mount Uhud. Thereupon he said to me, "O Abu Dharr." I said, "At your service, Messenger of Allah." He said, "It would not make me happy, if I were to have a pile of gold the size of Mount Uhud, for a single *dinar* of it to remain in my possession after three days had passed, except for a certain amount that I would keep aside for paying off debts".' (*ar-Risala al-Muhammadiyya*)

Prophet and *Mujahid* (warrior)

The same Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, who used to stand in prayer for so long during the night that his feet became swollen and cracked, and who used to fast continuously, is the one who said, "By Him Who has the soul of Muhammad in His Hand, I would love to fight in the Way of Allah and be killed, and then fight again and be killed again and then fight again and be killed once more."

He is the one who said, "Whoever dies without doing battle in the Way of Allah, or feeling in his heart the desire to do battle in the Way of Allah, has died with a branch of hypocrisy in his heart."

The Prophet who worships is the Prophet who fights; and the Prophet of Mercy is the Prophet of *jihad*. There is no kind of *jihad* in Islam except that which for the Cause of Allah. If it is not, then it is not Islamic *jihad*. Everything that is done in the Way of Allah is an act of mercy.

It is not our purpose here to go through all of the battles of

Islam in a systematic fashion, listing all the events and participants, but rather we will mention episodes from them from which we can learn a lesson.

The first thing of note from these accounts is the fact that the Worshipping Messenger never once retreated or fled during a battle, even on occasions when those great warriors and heroes of the Muhajirun and the Ansar ran away. He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was as immovable upon the battlefield as the well-anchored mountains, not moving from his spot on the front line. For example, in the Battle of Uhud when the Muslims were defeated and routed and they turned on their heels and fled and the idolaters were making every effort to kill him, the Messenger of Allah remained firm. In the same way, during the Battle of Hunayn when the huge Muslim army had fled, he stayed where he was and even advanced towards the enemy – for how could it even be conceivable for the most perfect man in existence to flee when he had that level of trust he had in the Allah?

The heroism and bravery of the Messenger of Allah, understood from the words of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib were not hidden from anyone. ‘Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, said, “When the fighting grew intense, we used to seek protection in the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and he was always the closest of us to the enemy.”

At the same that he, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used constantly to ask Allah for help and ask him to fulfil His promise of victory, he would also make sure he had organised his army as well as they could be organised and that every gap was filled; and this was true of everything he did. Before the Battle of Badr, he carefully arranged his army as well as he could, then turned to Allah and asked Him for aid. He was also optimistic, even if the enemy had forces ten times the size of the Muslim army. On the day of Badr, the idolaters had three times as many men as the Muslims, but the Muslims were defeated by them by Allah’s permission.

The defeat of the Muslims in the Battle of Uhud was an exception to the rule, and that only happened because they went against the orders of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and

grant him peace. Despite that, the optimism of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, did not leave him for even an instant. For immediately after their defeat at Uhud the Prophet, peace be upon him, ordered his Companions to smarten up, dress their wounds, and get ready to leap straight back into battle once again.

Another thing that shows the optimism of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is what he said during the digging of the ditch at the Battle of the Confederates. At that time, idolaters from all parts of the Arabian peninsula had formed an alliance with the Jews and traitors inside Madina and gathered outside the city with the intention of putting an end to Islam in Madina, both as a religion and creed and as a state. They purposed to kill all the Muslims and destroy them absolutely. In order to protect the city and themselves, and to prevent the idolaters from getting in, the Muslims built a trench around it. Al-Bara' ibn 'Azib related the following account of the building of the trench, an account that provides with a perfect example of the Prophet's optimism. "The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, commanded us to build the trench. The digging came to a halt when we struck upon a huge rock in a part of the trench that our pickaxes could not budge. We complained to the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, so he came with us and went down to the rock. Then he took up a pickaxe and said, 'In the Name of Allah.' Then he struck the rock a mighty blow and a third of the rock broke up. When that happened, he said, 'Allah is Great. I have been given the keys to Syria. By Allah, I see its red palaces from here.' Then he said, 'In the Name of Allah,' and struck the rock another time, whereupon another third of the rock broke away. Then he said, 'Allah is Great. I have been given the keys to Persia. By Allah, I can see Mada'in (Ctesiphon) and its white palace from here.'" Then he said, 'In the Name of Allah,' struck the rock a third time and destroyed the remainder of the rock. Then he said, 'Allah is great. I have been given the keys to Yemen. I can see the gates of San'a from here'."

This optimism, confidence and tranquillity spread like wildfire throughout the ranks of the Muslims, even though the idolaters mocked him for saying that and said, "Muhammad makes promis-

es to them and fills them with false hopes, while they are not even hopeful of safeguarding their own lives.”

This optimism and this confidence in Allah did not desert the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, for even an instant. It remained with him throughout the endless struggle and constant battle that was his lot until he died.

Another perfect example of this is what the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said to his Companion Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, when they were together in the cave during their *hijra* to Madina. Abu Bakr was distressed and afraid for the welfare of the Messenger, peace be upon him; so the Prophet said to him, in order to fill him with confidence and hope, “Do not be distressed, for Allah is with us.” And when Abu Bakr heard the footfalls and angry voices of the idolaters in front of the entrance to the cave, he said, ‘If any of them were but to look down at his feet, he would see us.’ The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, smiled and said, “What do you think of two people who have Allah as their Third Companion?”

Jihad

As-Suhayli, the author of *ar-Rawd al-unuf*, wrote the following passafe, under the heading ‘The occasion upon which the command to fight was sent down to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace’.

“In the Name of Allah, All-Merciful. Abu Muhammad ‘Abdu’l-Malik ibn Hisham related from Ziyad ibn ‘Abdullah al-Buka’i that Muhammad ibn Ishaq al-Mutabba said: ‘The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had not been given permission to fight or allowed to shed blood before the pledge of allegiance at ‘Aqaba. Rather he had been commanded to call mankind to Allah, bear insult and injury with patience, and forgive the ignorant.

The Quraysh had persecuted those of the Muhajirun who had followed him, torturing them to make them leave their *deen* and expelling them from their lands. These Muslims had the choice of

whether to leave their *deen*, be tortured, or flee from the idolaters by going to either Abyssinia or Madina.

When the Quraysh became insolent towards Allah, rejected the honour that He had wanted to bestow upon them, called His Prophet a liar, and tortured and exiled those who worshipped Him, affirmed His Oneness, believed in His Prophet and clung to His *Deen*, Allah gave His Prophet the permission to fight and help the Muslims against those who wronged them and treated them unjustly. The first verse to be sent down giving permission to make war, shed blood and fight, as I have heard from 'Urwa ibn Zubayr and other men of knowledge, was Allah's words: "*Permission is given to those who are fought against because they have been wronged – truly Allah has the power to give them victory – those who were expelled from their homes without any right, merely for saying, 'Our Lord is Allah'. If Allah had not driven some people back by means of others, monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques, where Allah's name is mentioned much, would have been pulled down and destroyed. Allah will certainly help those who help Him – Allah is All-Strong, Almighty – those who, if We establish them firmly on the earth, will establish the prayer and pay zakat, and command what is right and forbid what is wrong. The end result of all affairs is with Allah.*" (22:37-39). In other words, "I have only allowed them to fight because they have been treated unjustly. Their only offence against other people is that they worship Allah, and that if they were to come to ascendancy they would establish the prayer, pay *zakat*, enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong." In these noble verses, Allah is referring to His Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and his Companions, may Allah be pleased with them all.

Then Allah, Blessed and Exalted is He, sent down the verse, "*Fight them until there is no more fitna*" i.e. until the believer is no longer induced to leave his *deen* by torture "*and the Deen belongs to Allah alone*" (2:192): that is, until Allah is worshipped and none is worshipped besides Him. (*ar-Rawd al-unuf* by as-Suhayli)

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, who was, as we have seen, one of the greatest warriors, did not stand up or sit down without mentioning his Lord.

Some *Hadiths* about *Jihad*

Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, related that he heard the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, say: "By the One Who has my soul in His Hand, if it were not for the fact that men of the believers whom we could not afford to arm would have felt bad about being left behind, I would not have failed to go on a single raid in the Way of Allah. By Him Who has my soul in His Hand, I would love to fight in the Way of Allah and be killed, then fight again and be killed again, and then fight again and be killed once more." (al-Bukhari)

Sahl ibn Sa'd as-Sa'idi, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said: "Being a *murabit* for one day in the Way of Allah is better than this world and all that it contains; the space taken up by the whip of any of you in the Garden is better than this world and all that it contains; and a morning or an evening spent in the Way of Allah is better than this world and all that it contains."

Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, related that the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "Allah guarantees that he who goes forth in His way and sets out to fight only on account of his belief in Me and his affirmation of My Messengers, will either be sent back to his home with a reward from Allah or with the spoils of war, or admitted to Paradise. If it were not for the fact that it would have been very difficult for my Community, I would not have failed to go on a single raid. I would love to be slain in the way of Allah and then brought to life and then slain again and then brought to life and then slain again."

Salim Abu'n-Nadr, the freedman of 'Umar ibn 'Ubaydullah, who also used to write for him, said, "'Abdullah ibn Abi Awfa, may Allah be pleased with them both, wrote to him and I read the letter out to him. He wrote that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, on one of the days in which he met him, waited until the sun had passed its zenith, then stood up amongst the people and addressed them saying: "O people, do not desire to meet the enemy on the battlefield, but ask Allah for good health. If you do meet the enemy, then be steadfast and know that

Paradise is under the shadow of swords." Then he said, "O Allah, You Who send down the Book, Mover of Clouds, You Who defeat the tribes, vanquish them and give us victory over them!" (al-Bukhari)

Events in and around the Battle of Badr

The vision (dream) of 'Atika

'Atika bint 'Abdi'l-Muttalib, the aunt of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was living in Makka with her brother 'Abbas ibn 'Abdi'l-Muttalib. Before Badr and before the arrival of Damdam, she had a vision that frightened her. She sent for her brother 'Abbas immediately and he came to her. She said, "Tonight I had a dream that terrified me and made me fear that your people might be destroyed."

"What did you see?" he asked.

She said: "I will not tell you unless you promise me that you will not mention it to anyone, for if they were to hear about it they would cause us harm and make us hear things we would rather not hear." 'Abbas gave her his promise, and so she said: "I saw a rider mounted upon his camel approaching from the heights around Makka, shouting out at the top of his voice, 'O treacherous people, go [forth to fight war] in two or three days!' He continued to ride forward and shout until he entered the mosque still mounted. There he shouted out three times, and the people began to flock to him and became very frightened. Then I saw him mounted upon his camel on top of the Ka'ba. Again he shouted out three times, 'O treacherous and immoral people, go forth [to fight war] in two or three days!' Then I saw him mounted upon his camel, standing on the top of Abu Qubays, again shouting out, 'O treacherous and immoral people!' so loud that I could hear his words echoing from all parts of Makka. Then he went to a huge rock, lifted it out of its base and sent it rolling towards the inhabitants of Makka. It rolled towards Makka with an ominous rumble and then, when it came to the bottom of the mountain, it split up into

little pieces and there was no house within Makka that was not penetrated by a piece of that. It made me fear for your people."

'Abbas left her in a state of fear on account of her vision. Later that night, he met al-Walid ibn 'Utba ibn Rabi'a, who was a close friend of his, and told him about 'Atika's dream, but commanded him to not tell anyone about it. Al-Walid told his father 'Utba, who mentioned the dream to his brother Shayba, whereupon the account spread like wildfire throughout the Quraysh and Abu Jahl came to hear of it.

The next morning, 'Abbas got up and went to make *tawaf* of the House and found Abu Jahl, 'Utba ibn Rabi'a, Shayba ibn Rabi'a, Umayya ibn Khalaf, Ubayy ibn Khalaf, Zama'a ibn al-Aswad, Abu'l-Bakhtari and a few others sitting down in the mosque, deep in conversation. When Abu Jahl saw 'Abbas, he called to him and said, "Abu'l-Fadl, when you finish your *tawaf*, come and sit with us."

When 'Abbas completed his *tawaf* he went over and sat down with them. Then Abu Jahl said to him, "What is this vision that 'Atika saw?"

'Abbas replied, "She did not see anything."

Abu Jahl said, "Are the lies of your menfolk not enough, sons of 'Abdu'l-Muttalib, that you must now come to us with the lies of your womenfolk! Our tribe and your tribe were like two horses, running neck and neck striving for the line in order to obtain the glory. When the riders brushed against each other, you said, 'We have a Prophet from amongst us.' There is nothing left that you could say, except to claim now that you have a prophetess. There is no man or woman of the Quraysh amongst the families of the House who is greater liar than yours." Abu Jahl continued to pile insults upon him; then he said, "'Atika claimed that the rider said, 'Go forth [to battle] in two or three days.' When those three days have passed, all the Quraysh will know you to be liars and we will write down a record of that. You will be branded the greatest liars of the people of the House among the Arabs, both your men and women. Is it not enough for you, Banu Qusayy, that the offices of custodianship of the Ka'ba, watering the pilgrims, feeding the pilgrims, raising the banner of war, and chairing the council, are all

yours? Do you have to come with a Prophet as well?"

'Abbas said, "Are you finished? Then know that the lies are yours, and it is your family who are the liars."

Someone who was there said, "You used not to be so ignorant or stupid, Abu al-Fadl."

'Atika reproached 'Abbas most strongly for the harm he had caused by making her dream public. (*Dala'il an-nubuwwa*)

In the evening of the third day after 'Atika had her vision, a rider who had been sent by Abu Sufyan came. His name was Damdam ibn 'Amr al-Ghifari and he shouted out to the people, "O family of Ghalib ibn Fihr, go forth [to fight] for Muhammad and the people of Yathrib are lying in wait for Abu Sufyan. Go and protect your caravans!" The Quraysh became very frightened on account of what they had heard in the vision of 'Atika.

"Messenger of Allah, go where you wish"

When the news reached the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, that the Quraysh had set out to protect their caravans, he asked the people for advice. Abu Bakr spoke first and gave excellent advice, then 'Umar stood up and spoke well.

Then al-Miqdad ibn 'Amr stood up and said, "Messenger of Allah, go where Allah has commanded you to go, for we are with you. By Allah, we will not say to you what the Tribe of Israel said to Musa, peace be upon him, when they said, 'You and your Lord go and fight and we will stay sitting here.' Rather we will say, 'You and your Lord go and fight and we will be there with you fighting as well.' By the One Who sent you with the truth, even if you were to take us to Bark al-Ghimad, we would remain there fighting with you against its defenders until you had conquered it."

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, thanked him and asked that he be rewarded with good. Then he said, "Give me advice, o people" – by which he meant the Ansar, as they were the majority of the people present and because they had told him, when pledging their allegiance to him, "Messenger of Allah, we will not be responsible for your safety

until you come to us in Madina. When you are with us in our homes then you will be our responsibility: we will protect you as we protect ourselves, our women and our children." The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was afraid that the Ansar might not feel obliged to help him except when he was within the walls of Madina, or to make war against an enemy outside their realm. When the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said that, Sa'd ibn Mu'adh said, "It is as if you are referring to us, Messenger of Allah." The Prophet replied that he was, so Sa'd ibn Mu'adh said, "We believe in you, affirm that that which you have brought is the truth and have made a covenant with you to hear and obey. So, Messenger of Allah, go where you want and we will go there with you. By Him Who sent you with the truth, if you were to ask us to cross this sea with you and then you plunged into it, we would dive in with you; not a single man would remain behind. We do not dislike the fact that you are taking us to confront the enemy tomorrow, for we are steadfast in war and reliable at the moment when the two forces collide. Perhaps Allah will show you something about us that will make your heart glad, so go forth with the blessings of Allah."

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was overjoyed to hear this. Then he said, "Go forth and rejoice, for Allah has promised one of two parties. By Allah, it is if I could see the enemy lying prostrate in front of me at this very moment."

"You have given a fine opinion"

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, alighted at Badr, having preceded the Quraysh to it. When he got to the nearest water at Badr, he halted beside it. Thereupon al-Hubab ibn al-Mundhir asked him, "Messenger of Allah, is this a place Allah has commanded you to occupy and from which we may neither advance nor retreat, or is it a matter of opinion, war and artifice?"

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him

peace, said, "The decision is based on opinion and tactical considerations."

Al-Hubab then said: "Messenger of Allah, this is not a place in which we should stop. We should keep going forward until all the wells are behind us, then stop up all the wells except for one. We should then construct a cistern by the remaining well so that we can have plenty of water. Then when we fight them, we will have water to drink and they will have nothing to drink until the battle comes to end."

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "You have given a fine opinion." They did what al-Hubab suggested and filled in the wells, and built a cistern beside the remaining well which quickly filled up with water. Then the men replenished their drinking vessels.

The Quraysh arrived the next morning, led by 'Utba ibn Rabi'a, riding a red camel. When the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, saw them descending from the hills, he said, "O Allah, here come the Quraysh in their arrogance and pride to fight against You and deny Your Prophet. O Allah, vanquish and destroy them this morning."

The emotions of youth

'Abdu'r-Rahman ibn 'Awf, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "While I was standing in the ranks on the day of Badr, I looked to my right and my left, saw two young men from the *Ansar*, and hoped that I was stronger than them both. One of them nudged me and said, 'Uncle, do you know what Abu Jahl looks like?'

I replied, 'Yes, but what do you want of him, nephew?'

He said, 'I have been told that he insulted the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. By Him Who has my soul in His hand, if I see him I will fall on him, and we will not be parted until one of us is dead.' I was amazed when he said that. Then the other one nudged me and said something very similar. Soon after that, I saw Abu Jahl moving around amongst the people, so I told them, 'That is the one you are after!' Thereupon they rushed at him with their swords and struck him until he was

killed. Then they went to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and gave him the news.

‘Which one of you killed him?’ he asked.

Both of them replied that he had killed him, so the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asked them if they had cleaned their swords yet. They replied that they had not, so he looked at their swords. Then he said, ‘Both of you killed him,’ and ruled that the spoils should be given to Mu‘adh ibn ‘Amr ibn al-Jamuh. The other young man was Mu‘adh ibn ‘Afra’.” (al-Bukhari)

Sawad ibn Ghaziya

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, walked along the ranks of his soldiers, who were champing at the bit in anticipation of the fight, marshalling them and making sure they were standing in line, shoulder to shoulder, like a well-built wall. One of those eager fighters was Sawad ibn Ghaziya, and he stepped forward out of his line. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, pricked him with an arrow that was in his hand and said to him, “Get back in line, Sawad.”

He said, “Messenger of Allah, you have wounded me, and Allah has sent you with truth and justice, so give me my just retribution.”

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, “Take your retaliation.”

Sawad said, “How can I do so when you pricked my bare stomach?”

Thereupon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, uncovered his belly and told him to retaliate. Then Sawad embraced the Prophet and kissed his belly. He, peace be upon him, said, “What made you do that, Sawad?”

He replied, “Messenger of Allah, you can see what is before us, so I wanted my last memory of you to be my skin touching your skin.” The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asked Allah to reward him with good.

To Paradise

The idolaters came forth to meet the Muslims in battle on the Day of Badr. When they drew close, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Hasten to a Garden as wide as the heavens and the earth."

'Umar ibn al-Hamam al-Ansari asked, "Messenger of Allah, a Garden as wide as the heavens and the earth?"

The Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, said, "Yes," whereupon 'Umar said, "Excellent!"

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "What made you say, 'Excellent!'?"

He replied, "Nothing made me say it, Messenger of Allah, except my hope that I should be one of its inhabitants."

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "You shall be one of its inhabitants." Thereupon 'Umar al-Ansari took some dates from his quiver and started to eat them. Then he said, "If I live long enough to eat these dates then I have lived too long!" He then threw away the remaining dates that were in his hand and fought until he was killed." (Muslim)

Situations and events

Ibn 'Umar and the Battle of Badr

Ibn 'Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "I was presented before the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, on the Day of Badr, but he considered me too small and did not accept me into his army. That night, because the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had not accepted me, I spent a night the like of which I have never spent again in terms of sleeplessness, sadness and crying. The next year, I was presented before him once again and he accepted me, so I praised Allah for that."

"If it were for anything but Paradise"

Sulayman ibn Bilal, may Allah be pleased with him, related that when the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, set out for Badr, Sa'd ibn Khaytham and his father wanted to set out with him. This was mentioned to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and he ordered that only one of them go. Khaytham ibn al-Harith said to his son Sa'd, may Allah be pleased with them both, "One of us must stay behind, so you stay here with our womenfolk."

Sa'd replied, "If it were for anything but Paradise then I would have preferred you to go; but I want to attain martyrdom." He set out for Badr with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and was martyred.

Effects of the Battle of Badr

'Umayr ibn Wahb was sitting with Safwan ibn Umayya in the *Hijr* shortly after the Quraysh had been defeated at Badr and those who had been killed had been killed. 'Umayr was one of the great *shaytans* of the Quraysh and he used to insult, revile and cause distress to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and his Companions a great deal while they were in Makka. His son Wahb ibn 'Umayr was one of the Qurayshis taken captive at Badr – Rifa'a ibn Rafi', one of the Banu Zurayq, had captured him.

'Umayr mentioned those who had been killed and thrown into the well, and then Safwan said, "By Allah, there is no good left in life now that they are dead."

'Umayr replied, "By Allah, you have spoken the truth. By Allah, if it were not for the fact that I have debts which I do not have the means to pay and a family that I cannot leave unprovided for, I would ride to Muhammad and kill him. I have good cause against them, for they are holding my son captive. Safwan took him up on that and said, "I will pay your debts for you, and will look after your family along with mine as long as they live: they will not want for anything from me."

While 'Umar ibn al-Khattab was standing among a group of the Muslims talking about the Battle of Badr and how Allah had honoured them and how He had dealt with their enemies, he

caught sight of 'Umayr ibn Wahb girt with a sword and making his camel kneel in front of the mosque. He said, "That dog is the enemy of Allah, 'Umayr ibn Wahb. By Allah, he has not come except to commit some evil act. It was he who incited the people against us and calculated our numbers for the enemy on the day of Badr."

'Umar went in to see the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and said, "Prophet of Allah, the enemy of Allah, 'Umayr ibn Wahb, is here. He has come bearing his sword."

The Prophet, peace be upon him, told him to let 'Umayr in, so 'Umar went out to him and grabbed his shoulder scabbard and pulled him with it. Then he said to those of the Ansar who were around him, "Go in to the Messenger of Allah, sit down beside him and beware of this evil man as he is not to be trusted. Then he brought him in to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. When the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, saw 'Umar holding him tightly by the shoulder strap, he said, "Let him go, 'Umar. Come closer to me, 'Umayr."

He came close and then said, "May your morning be blessed," for that was the way the people of the *Jahiliyya* greeted each other. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, replied, "Allah has honoured us by giving us a greeting better than yours, 'Umayr. It is *salaam* ('peace'), the greeting of the people of Paradise."

He replied, "By Allah, Muhammad, you have only come to know that recently."

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "What has brought you here, 'Umayr?"

He replied, "I came on account of this prisoner who is in your grasp to ask you to treat him well."

"Why do you have a sword around your neck, then?" asked the Messenger, peace be upon him.

He replied, "Allah curse all swords, for they have not benefited us at all."

"Tell me the truth. Why did you bring it?"

"I have not come for any reason except the one I told you about."

The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "No! You sat down with Safwan in the *Hijr* and talked about the Qurayshi companions of the pit. Then you said, 'If it were not for my debts and my family who are reliant on me, I would go forth and kill Muhammad. Thereupon Safwan said that he would relieve you of your debts and look after your family in exchange for you killing me; but Allah has prevented that happening.'"

'Umayr said, "I bear witness that you are the Messenger of Allah. We used to deny, O Messenger of Allah, that which you brought from the heavens and the revelations that descended upon you, but this a matter that no one knew about except for Safwan and myself. By Allah, I know that no one could have told you about this except Allah. Praise be to Allah Who has guided me to Islam and led me along this path." Then he bore witness to the truth.

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "He is now your brother in the *Deen*, so teach him the Qur'an and set free his prisoner for him." They did as he commanded. Then 'Umayr said, "Messenger of Allah, I used to strive to extinguish the Light of Allah and cause great harm to those who had adopted the *Deen* of Allah. Now I want you to give me permission to go to back to Makka and call them to Allah, His Messenger and Islam, for perhaps Allah will guide them. If Allah does not guide them, then I will harrass them for their religion as I used to harrass your Companions for their *deen*."

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, gave him permission to do as he asked, and he headed back towards Makka. Now, when 'Umayr set out, Safwan ibn Umayya had started to say to people, "Rejoice, for, in a few days, you will have news of an incident that will cause you to forget what happened at Badr." Every day, Safwan would ask riders for news of 'Umayr until one day a rider came and told him that he had become Muslim. Thereupon he swore that he would never again speak to him or do him a service."

'Umayr came back to Makka and remained there calling people

to Islam and harrassing those who opposed him. Many people became Muslim at his hands. (Ibn Ishaq)

Young men in battle

Boys as young as fifteen years old would push one another aside in their eagerness to come to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and obtain his permission to take part in the great honour of fighting in the Way of Allah.

One time, Samura ibn Jundub and Rafi' ibn Khudayj, who were both fifteen years old, came to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, but he rejected them as being too young. Then the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was informed that Rafi' was an archer, so he granted him permission to take part. After the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, had given permission to Rafi', a man told him, "Messenger of Allah, Samura can defeat Rafi' at wrestling;" so he gave him permission as well.

The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, did, however, reject Usama ibn Zayd, 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar, Zayd ibn Thabit, al-Bara' ibn 'Azib, 'Amr ibn Hazm, and Usayd ibn Zahir, because he considered them all to be too young, even though every one of them longed to leap into battle and obtain the honour of fighting in the Way of Allah. When they were eventually given permission to fight during the Battle of the Trench, every one of these boys rejoiced and felt great happiness.

As for those boys who were older than fifteen and were versed in the arts of war, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, gave them all permission to take part.

Old men in battle

When the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, set out for Uhud, Husayl ibn Jabir (the father of Hudhayfa ibn al-Yaman) and Thabit ibn Waqsh remained behind with the women and children. One of them said to the other, and they were both very old men, "You have no father! What are you waiting for? By Allah, we are both going to drop dead at any

moment, whether it be today or tomorrow, so why do we not take hold of our swords and catch up with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace? Then perhaps Allah will grant us martyrdom in the Way of Allah and in the company of His Messenger." They took up their swords and joined the ranks of the army without being noticed.

Thabit ibn Waqsh was killed by the idolaters and Husayl ibn Jabir was struck repeatedly by the swords of the Muslims so that they did not recognise him, and he was also killed. Hudhayfa saw him and shouted out, "My father!" The Muslims said, "We did not recognise him," and they spoke the truth. Hudhayfa said, "May Allah forgive you, as He is the Most Merciful of the merciful." The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, wanted to give him the blood money, but Hudhayfa decided to donate the blood money to the believers; and that increased his standing in the eyes of the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him.

'Amr ibn Jamuh was lame and severely crippled in one leg. He had four sons who were all as brave as lions and would go on expeditions with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. On the day of Uhud, they tried to make him stay behind and said, "Allah, Mighty and Exalted, has given you a valid excuse for not going."

He came to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and said to him, "My sons want to prevent me going to this battle and setting out with you, but by Allah I want to walk in Paradise with this lame leg of mine."

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, addressing 'Amr, "As for you, Allah has given you an excuse and *jihad* is not an obligation upon you." Then he turned to 'Amr's sons and said, "But as for you, it was not right for you to prevent him going, for perhaps Allah will make him a martyr." 'Amr set out with him and was martyred on the day of Uhud.

The *Fedayeen* in battle (those desiring to be martyred in the Way of Allah)

The one desire of the idolaters during the Battle of Uhud was to kill the Messenger of Allah. When many of the Muslims fled, the idolaters tried to seize the opportunity and, with the aim of killing him, made a sally in great numbers towards the Messenger of Allah.

Ziyad ibn as-Sakan, with five of the *Ansar*, stood between the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and the enemy. They fought in his defence, man by man, until only Ziyad remained fighting. Then he continued to fight until he was overcome by his wounds...

Then Abu Dujana flung himself in front of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and leaned over him, and using his body as a shield taking many of the enemy's arrows in his back.

Umm 'Umara (also known as Nusayba bint Ka'b) fought to protect the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him. Umm Sa'd bint Sa'd ibn ar-Rabi' said, "Umm 'Umara came in to see me and I said to her, 'Aunt, tell me what happened.' She said, 'I went out at the beginning of the day to find out what had happened to our people, bringing with me water to quench their thirsts. I came to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, when the Muslims were in the ascendancy and seemed to have won. Then when the Muslims were defeated, I joined the party of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and was directly involved in the fighting. I defended the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, with both sword and bow until I was wounded.' I saw a deep wound on her shoulder and asked her who had done it to her. She said, 'Ibn Qami'a, may Allah humiliate him'." When the people fled and left the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, Ibn Qami'a approached saying, 'Lead me to Muhammad – he will not escape me.' I went out against him with Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr and a few others of those who had not fled. Thereupon he struck me and wounded me. I had also struck him a few times, but the enemy of Allah was wearing armour. Then the

Muslims came back and drove the idolaters away from the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him.”

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said about her, “In every direction I looked I saw her fighting to protect me.”

“That whole day belonged to Talha”

‘A’isha, may Allah be pleased with her, related that when Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, reminisced about the Battle of Uhud, he would say, “That whole day belonged to Talha.” He went on to mention some the events of that day and then said, “We came to the Messenger of Allah and found that his tooth had been broken, his face cut open, and two rings from his helmet had embedded themselves in his cheek. He told us when we got to him, ‘Help your companion,’ by which he meant Talha, who was exhausted and had lost a lot of blood. We found Talha lying in a ditch, having been wounded in more than seventy places: he had been cut by swords and pierced by arrows and spears. His finger had also been cut off, so we dressed his wounds.”

The scent of Paradise

Zayd ibn Thabit, may Allah be pleased with him, said, “The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, sent me on the day of Uhud to search for Sa’d ibn ar-Rabi’, may Allah be pleased with him. He said, ‘If you see him give him my greeting and tell him, “The Messenger of Allah asks you, ‘How do you find yourself?’”’

I started to go around the dead bodies looking for him and found him on the point of death, having been struck in more than seventy places: he had been cut by swords and pierced by arrows and spears. I said to him, ‘O Sa’d, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, sends you his greeting and says to you, ‘How do you find yourself?’

He replied, ‘Peace be upon the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and peace be upon you. Tell him, “Messenger of Allah, I find myself smelling the scent of Paradise;”

and tell my people, the Ansar, "You will have no excuse if anything disagreeable happens to the Messenger of Allah, while there still remains a single one of you who can flutter an eyelid."""

The angels washed him

Hanzala ibn Abi 'Amir had just begun to have sexual intercourse with his wife when the call to fight *jihad* was made. He set out immediately and hurried to the battlefield at Uhud, where he continued to demonstrate his great bravery and intrepid spirit until an arrow surprised him and he died a martyr. After the battle, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "I saw the angels holding Hanzala ibn Abi 'Amir in the air between the heavens and earth and washing him with rain water in silver platters."

The Companions went to look for him among the dead and found him with water dripping from his hair. They told the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and he said, "Go to his wife and ask her about his condition." They went to her and she said, "It was only our first night together after getting married, and when he heard the caller summoning people to *jihad* he rushed out in a state of major ritual impurity." They returned to the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and told him what she had said. He observed, peace be upon him: "For that reason, the angels washed him."

The Battle of Uhud and confidence in victory from Allah

It was by the wisdom of Allah that the Muslims were defeated in Uhud, for there is a wisdom from Allah in everything. He tests His slaves by means of fortune and misfortune, happiness and grief. Everything happens by His Decree.

As soon as the battle had ended the idolaters went away, leaving the Muslims defeated and in disarray. The Muslims thought that they were going to go to Madina and destroy the city, kill all the men and take all the women and children prisoner, and were worried by that prospect. The defeat, however, had not weakened their resolve or discouraged them. Their faith had not been shak-

en, and their confidence in victory from Allah and their reliance upon Him remained firm; so they made up their minds that even though they were tired and wounded they had to try to get to Madina before the idolaters were ready to fight again.

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, told 'Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, "Follow the enemy's tracks and see what they are doing and where they are going. If they are riding their camels and leaving their horses to one side, then they are making for Makka but if they are riding their horses and driving their camels then they are making for Madina. By Him Who has my soul in His hand, if they are going to Madina I will go there immediately and fight them there."

'Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "I went out, examined their tracks in order to find out what their intentions were and discovered that they were riding their camels and had put their horses to one side. That meant that they were going towards Makka."

After they had travelled some way along the road to Makka, however, the idolaters began to criticise one another. One of them said, "You have accomplished nothing. You found the one who is a thorn in your side on his own, then left him amongst the living! Their leaders remain alive and they will gather together against you, so go back and finish them off completely."

Another person said, "You did not kill Muhammad, nor did you capture any plump maidens. You have done nothing good. Go back."

News of this reached the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, so he called on the Muslims to go forth and meet them in battle, hoping by this to instil fear in the enemy and demonstrate to them that the Muslims were still a force to be reckoned with. Such was the confidence of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in Allah's promised help that the only people he would permit to go on this expedition were those who had been present during the Battle of Uhud itself. The only exception was Jabir ibn 'Abdullah, who had said to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, "Messenger of Allah, I do not want you to take part in any battle without me being there with you."

Hearing the the call of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, the Muslims obeyed and travelled along the road to Makka until they reached Hamra' al-Asad. When the idolaters heard that they had come out they said "We will return next year," and then they returned to Makka.

Allah then sent down the verses: *"Rejoicing in blessings and favour from Allah and that Allah does not let the wage of the believers go to waste. Those who did good and were godfearing among those who responded to Allah and the Messenger after the wound had been inflicted will have an immense reward."* (3:171-172)

Some riders from 'Abdu'l-Qays passed by Abu Sufyan, who was at that time the leader of the Quraysh. He asked them where they were going and they informed him that they were going to Madina. He asked them why, and they told him that they needed supplies. Then he asked them, "Will you pass on a message from me to Muhammad? In exchange, I will load your camels with raisins when you come there." They agreed to do so, so he said, "When you meet Muhammad, tell him that we have resolved to come to him and his Companions and exterminate them."

The riders passed by the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, while he was still at Hamra' al-Asad and told him what Abu Sufyan and his companions had said. The reaction of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and his Companions to this message is amply described in the Quran: *"Those to whom people said, 'The people have gathered against you, so fear them.' But that merely increased their faith and they said, 'Allah is enough for us and the Best of Guardians.' So they returned with blessings and bounty from Allah and no evil touched them. They pursued the pleasure of Allah; Allah's favour is indeed immense."* (Quran: 173-174)

Some of those who were wounded

Abu's-Sa'ib related that a man from the Banu 'Abdi'l-Ashhal said: "I and one of my brothers were present at Uhud and we returned to the city wounded. When the *mu'adhdhin* of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, announced that we were to go out in pursuit of the enemy, I said

to my brother (or he said to me), 'Is a battle in the company of the Messenger of Allah going to pass us by? By Allah, we will go even though we do not have a beast to ride and are severely wounded.' We went out with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and since my wounds were lighter than his, I carried him when he was too tired to walk. We continued thus, him walking for a time and being carried for a time, then walking for a time and so on, until we reached the place where the Muslims had halted."

I smell the scent of Paradise

Anas, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "My uncle, Anas ibn an-Nadr, missed the fighting at Badr and said, 'Messenger of Allah, I missed the first battle in which you fought the idolaters. If Allah gives me the opportunity to fight the idolaters, Allah will see what I shall do!'

On the day of the Battle of Uhud, the Muslims were routed and Anas said, 'O Allah, I apologise to You for what these people have done (i.e. his Companions) and I declare myself innocent to You of what those people have done, (i.e. the idolaters).' Then he went forward and Sa'd ibn Mu'adh met him. He said, 'O Sa'd ibn Mu'adh! By the Lord of an-Nadr, to the Garden! I smell its scent from below Uhud!'

Sa'd said later, 'Messenger of Allah, I was not able to do what he did.' We found him with more than eighty wounds: he had been cut by swords and pierced by arrows and spears. He had been killed and the idolaters had mutilated him. No one was able to recognise him except his sister, who recognised him by his fingertips. We came to think that the following verse had been sent about him and those like him: "*Among the believers there are men who have been true to the contract they made with Allah...* (to the end of the verse)" (33:23)

All might belongs to Allah and His Messenger

‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abdullah ibn Ubayy heard that his father had said, “If we return to Madina, the mightier will drive out the lesser.” When he came to Madina, he stood at its gate with his sword drawn, waiting for his father to come. When he came he said to him, “Are you the one who said, ‘If we return to Madina, the mightier will drive out the inferior’? By Allah, you will find out whether the might belongs to you or to the Messenger of Allah. Its shade (i.e. the shade of Madina) will not give you refuge, nor will you dwell there until Allah or His Messenger grants you permission to do so,” and he refused to let him enter. This continued until the Messenger of Allah, may bless him and grant him peace, sent to him commanding him to open the way. (*Tafsir* of at-Tabari)

Prophet over father

Despite his cleverness and skill, Abu Sufyan could not find anyone to help him – not even his daughter Umm Habiba, the wife of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. She had such an aversion to *shirk* that she folded up the carpet of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, so that her father could not sit upon it. When he asked her, by way of seeking an explanation, “Do you think I am too good for the carpet or that the carpet is too good for me?” She replied, “This is the carpet of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and you are an unclean idolater: I do not want you to sully it.” He departed angrily, saying, “By Allah, something evil has happened to you since you left me.” Abu Sufyan was mistaken, for it was not evil or bad manners that had made her do that to him, but hatred of *shirk* and a deep love for the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

The difference between the power of the *Deen* and the power of a king

The Muslim army encamped at Marr az-Zahran. The army passed by Abu Sufyan after he had been granted safety by al-

‘Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him. He said to ‘Abbas, with his *Jabiliyya* understanding, “O Abu’l-Fadl, the kingdom of your nephew has become great.” Al-‘Abbas said, with his Islamic understanding, “Woe upon you! It is not on account of kingship, but because of his prophetic office.” Abu Sufyan said, “Yes, you are right.”

Pardon from the All-Powerful

When the Quraysh were gathered before him after the Conquest of Makka, he, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asked them, “Tribe of Quraysh, what do you think I am going to do to you?” They replied, “Good, for you are a generous brother and the son of a generous brother.” Then he started weeping and said: “Go in peace, for you have all been freed. I say to you what my brother Yusuf said to his brothers: *“No blame at all will fall on you. Today you have forgiveness from Allah. He is the Most Merciful of the merciful.”* (12:92)

Giving of one’s wealth after giving of oneself

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, encouraged the wealthy to spend in the Way of Allah, and announced that anyone who equipped the Army of Hardship would be granted Paradise. The Muslims, both men and women, strove to outdo each other in how much they gave: women would give their jewellery and men would give anything they could.

Abu Bakr gave all the money he had, which amounted to four thousand *dirhams*. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asked him if he had left anything for his family, and he replied, “I have left them Allah and His Messenger.”

‘Abdu’r-Rahman ibn ‘Awf came with a hundred *uqiyyas* of pure gold, and ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan brought three hundred camels and one thousand *dinars*. He placed the *dinars* in the lap of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was overjoyed at his generosity and said, “O Allah, be con-

tent with 'Uthman, for I am pleased with him. 'Uthman does not have to do anything after today."

Ibn Ishaq said, "I have heard that Ibn Yamin ibn 'Umayr ibn Ka'b an-Nadri met Abu Layla and 'Abdullah ibn Mughaffal and they were both weeping. He asked, "What has brought you to tears?" They replied, "We went to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, to ask him for mounts, but he could not find anything on which to mount us. We want to go with him, but have nothing." So he gave them a watering camel upon which they mounted. Then he gave them some dates and they set out with the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace." (Ibn Ishaq)

As for 'Ulba ibn Zayd, he set out in the night, did some prayers and then wept. He called out, "O Allah, You have commanded me to do *jihad* and made me desire it. Then You did not give me the strength or the means to do so, or give Your Messenger anything upon which to mount me, though I give *sadaqa* to every Muslim who is afflicted by misfortune, either with either my money, person or possessions."

Morning came, and the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Where is the one who gives *sadaqa* today?" No one stood up, so he repeated, "Where is the one who gives *sadaqa*? Let him stand up." Somebody got up to tell him ('Ulba ibn Zayd) that he was being asked for, so he went to the Prophet. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said to him, "Rejoice, for by Him Who has my soul in His Hand, you have been recorded as being among those whose *zakat* is accepted."

"Even if it is 'Amr"

Ka'b ibn Malik al-Ansari, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "On the day of the Battle of the Trench, somebody came forth wearing a distinguishing mark to show his rank, and an iron helmet. He called out, 'Who will respond to my challenge?' 'Ali ibn Abi Talib stood up and said, 'Prophet of Allah, I will fight him.' He replied, 'Sit down, for it is 'Amr.'

Then 'Amr called out his challenge a second time and started to rebuke them saying, 'Where is your Garden to which you claim those of you who die will be admitted? Is there not one man who will come forth and fight me?' 'Ali stood up once again and said, 'Let it be me, Messenger of Allah.' He replied, 'It is 'Amr. Sit down.'

Then 'Amr made his challenge for a third time. 'Ali stood up and said, 'I will fight him, Messenger of Allah.' He replied, 'It is 'Amr.' 'Ali said, 'Even if it is 'Amr.' The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, gave him permission to fight; and 'Ali marched towards him and said, 'I hope to make the mourning women stand over your corpse, struck down by the blow of a spear whose memory will last as long as fights are talked of."

"'Amr asked him who he was and he replied that he was 'Ali. He asked if he meant 'Ali ibn 'Abd Manaf and 'Ali said, 'No, I am 'Ali ibn Abi Talib.' Thereupon 'Amr said, 'Nephew, you have uncles who are older than you. I do not want to shed your blood.' 'Ali retorted, 'But, by Allah, I do want to shed your blood.'

'Amr became angry, got down off his mount, drew his sword, which flashed like fire, and then advanced towards 'Ali in a state of fury. 'Ali confronted him with his spear, but 'Amr cut into it with his sword. His sword stuck into it, but still hit 'Ali upon the head and wounded him slightly. Then 'Ali struck him in the neck upon the jugular vein and he fell to the ground, and the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, heard his *takbir* and knew that 'Ali had won. Then 'Ali came back towards the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, smiling broadly. 'Umar ibn al-Khattab asked him, 'Have you stripped him of his armour? For it is the best suit of armour to be found among the Arabs.' 'Ali replied, 'When I struck him down, his private parts became exposed, and I felt too ashamed to strip him of his armour.'

"It is the paternal aunt of the Messenger of Allah"

'Abbad narrated that "Safiyya bint 'Abd al-Muttalib was in a fortified house. She said, 'One of the Jews passed by and then

started to circle the fort. This happened after the Banu Qurayza had declared war against the Muslims and broken all their pacts with the Messenger of Allah. There was no one in the fort to protect us, as the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and his Companions were at the necks of their enemy, unable to leave them to come to our aid if any of them came upon us.'

When Safiyya saw the Jew circling the fort, she said, 'I do not feel safe from this man, as he might lead the other Jews to our door, and the Messenger of Allah and his Companions are otherwise engaged and cannot come to help us.'

Safiyya took hold of a staff, then descended from the fort and struck the man with the staff until she had killed him. When she had finished she returned to the fort without taking any of the spoils. She said, 'Nothing prevented me from taking the spoils except for the fact that he was a man'."

"O Allah, inform Your Prophet about us"

It is related that Abu Hurayra said: "The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, sent out ten men on a scouting expedition and put 'Asim ibn Thabit al-Ansari, the grandfather of 'Asim ibn 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, in command of them. They set out and went forth until they reached Had'a, which is between 'Usfan and Makka. Their presence was reported to a branch of Hudhayl called the Banu Lihyān, who sent out nearly two hundred men, every one of them an archer, to follow their tracks.

"When 'Asim and his companions saw them, they took refuge in a high place. Thereupon the people surrounded them and said, 'If you come down and give yourselves up, we will give you our word and pact that we will not kill any of you.' 'Asim ibn Thabit, the commander of the expedition, said, 'As for me, by Allah, I will not come down today and be taken into custody by unbelievers! O Allah, inform Your Prophet about us!' When he said that, the unbelievers shot at them with arrows and killed seven of them, including 'Asim. The remaining three – Khubayb al-Ansari, [Zayd] ibn Duthayna, and a third man – accepted their pact, came

down and gave themselves up into their custody. When the enemy had them in their grasp, they undid their bow-strings and tied them up. When he saw this, the third man said, 'This is the beginning of treachery! By Allah, I will not accompany you! These men are a perfect example of what their intentions are (i.e. the seven who had been killed). They tried to drag him along and persuade him to accompany them, but he refused, so they killed him. Then they departed, taking Khubayb and Ibn Duthayna with them, and sold them in Makka after the Battle of Badr.

The sons of al-Harith ibn 'Amir ibn Nawfal ibn 'Abd Manaf purchased Khubayb, for they wanted revenge as he had killed their father, al-Harith ibn 'Amir, at Badr. Khubayb remained a prisoner with them.

'Ubaydullah ibn 'Iyad told me that the daughter of al-Harith had informed him that when they gathered, Khubayb had asked her to lend him a razor from her with which to shave his pubic hair, so she lent it to him. Then she said, 'He took a son of mine who had gone to him while I was not paying attention. I found my son sitting on his thigh while he was holding the razor in his hand. I was so alarmed that Khubayb noticed it in my face and said, 'Are you afraid that I am going to kill him? I would never do that.' By Allah, I have never seen a better prisoner than Khubayb. By Allah, one day, while he was shackled in irons, I found him with a bunch of grapes in his hand, eating them. This was at a time in which there was no fruit in Makka.' Later, she would say, 'It was provision from Allah which He bestowed upon Khubayb.'

When they brought him out of the Haram in order to kill him on land where it was lawful to spill blood, Khubayb asked them to let him pray two *rak'ats*. They permitted him to do so and he performed his two *rak'ats*. Then he said to them, 'Were it not for the fact that you might think me afraid of death, I would have made them longer. O Allah, count them many times over! I do not care what manner of death I die when I am slain as a Muslim! That is for the sake of Allah, and if He wills, He will bless the joints of a torn limb!'

Then one of the sons of al-Harith killed him. Thus it was Khubayb who was the first to instigate the *Sunna* (custom) for

every Muslim man killed in captivity to pray two *rak'ats* before going to his death.

Allah responded to the supplication that 'Asim ibn Thabit had made on the day he was killed, and informed His Prophet. The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, then told his Companions about them and how they had died.

When the unbelievers of the Quraysh had been informed that 'Asim had been killed, they sent some of their number to bring some recognisable part of him to them, as he had killed one of their chief men on the Day of Badr and they wanted to make an example of him. However, Allah sent a cloud-like swarm of bees to hover over the body of 'Asim and protect him from their emissary, who was completely unable to cut off any of his flesh." (al-Bukhari)

Chapter 14

Conclusion

Directives from the Qur'an

The Prophet is a blessing for the believers

(a) Allah, glory be to Him, says in His Noble Book: *"Allah showed great kindness to the believers when He sent a Messenger to them from among themselves to recite His Signs to them and purify them and teach them the Book and Wisdom, though before that they were clearly misguided."* (3:164)

There are many Qur'anic verses of this kind and every one of them stresses the fact that the Mission of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was a great blessing from Allah for all believers. The Generous Lord showed great kindness to us in sending us the Prophet, peace be upon him.

That is because our Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was a paragon of truthfulness when it came to conveying Allah's revelation to the believers. He recited the verses to them after first reciting them to himself, understanding them, drinking in their meanings, and putting them into practice in his daily life. In this way, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, became the source of purification for the believers, for he was a living example of the Qur'anic message and provided them with a perfect role model to try to emulate. The Signs of Allah had purified him, for he lived and breathed them.

As well as conveying the Words of the Qur'an to his Companions by his recitation of them, he also taught them the meanings of the verses and the ways in which they were to be interpreted. He taught by his own personal conduct, and by cor-

recting others when they acted wrongly. He taught the Qur'an, but only after he himself had come to embody its teachings in every aspect of his life; and only after he himself had become a Qur'an. He did not think, feel or want anything except by the Qur'an. This fact was famously expressed by 'A'isha, may Allah be pleased with her, when she described the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, by saying, "His character was the Qur'an."

In truth, it would have been impossible for the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, to be otherwise, and every person of insight will understand 'A'isha's words without any need for explanation. For if the Prophet had not been the embodiment of the Qur'an, then the Qur'an could never have been properly understood. The Qur'an contains many principles, but these principles are only theoretical and would have been impossible to implement if someone had not put them into practice for us and brought them to life. Mankind needed someone to fully realise these divine principles and embody every aspect of them, so that they could take him as a role model and then try to follow as many of those principles as they could. If such a man had not come, then the principles of the Qur'an would, today, still remain in the realm of theory.

A man did come, however, and he embodied those eternal attributes of good character and conduct that Allah willed for humankind and which He describes for us in the Qur'an. That man was the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. He realised Allah's Will for mankind in the most perfect way possible: in his being and in his conduct and behaviour. He took society from its lowest form and took it to its highest form imaginable: by creating the Islamic Community.

Since he embodied Allah's divine principles, this meant that he had submitted to Allah's will in the most perfect way. Thus he was the first of the Muslims (as *Muslim* means 'one who submits').

The Qur'an explains exactly in what sense he was the first of the Muslims. Allah says: "*Say: 'My prayer and my rites, my living and my dying, are for Allah alone, the Lord of all the worlds, Who has no partner. I am commanded to be like that, and I am the first of the Muslims.'*" (6:164-165) What these verses show is that the actions

and entire life of the Prophet, peace be upon him, even his death, were for Allah, the Lord of all the worlds: he did not move or breathe except by His leave. It was this fact that made him the first of the Muslims.

His Companions followed and emulated him and realised, to differing degrees, the same divine principles, and in this way the first Islamic society was brought into reality.

There are certain historians and others today who claim that Islam is a utopian ideal and that many of its principles are impractical and purely theoretical. This view is completely disproved by the fact of the first Islamic society. Islam was a living reality in Madina, and all aspects of its society were governed by Allah's Laws. The society itself was Muslim and submitted itself to the Will of Allah.

This society was the fruit of the great struggle and *jihad* of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, to put into practice the ethical code that Allah had revealed to him in the Qur'an. This society came about as a result of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, reciting the verses of Allah and purifying those around him by his own example and teachings.

The spirit of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, drank its fill of the meanings of the Qur'an and was cleansed, purified and enlightened by them. His spirit overflowed with wisdom, as a direct result of the perfect guidance and light that had saturated his heart. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, used to teach the Qur'an, as we have already said; but he also used to teach wisdom. What is wisdom? Wisdom is in the *hadiths* of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. These *hadiths* bring light to hearts and understanding to intellects; these *hadiths* bring a slave close to his Lord. This wisdom, or '*hikma*', is from Allah, just as His Book is. Allah says: "*Allah has sent down the Book and Wisdom to you and taught you what you did not know before. Allah's favour to you is indeed immense.*" (4:112)

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, did not speak from whim. "It is nothing but Revelation revealed." Thus he recited the verses of Allah, taught the Book of

Allah, and admonished with the wisdom that descended upon his heart.

Ash-Shafi'i, may Allah have mercy on him, said, "Allah mentions the Book, which is the Qur'an, and mentions *bikma* ('wisdom'). I heard one of the scholars of the Qur'an whom I trust say, "*Hikma* is the *Sunna* of the Messenger of Allah". This is consistent with what He said; but Allah knows best."

Allah bestowed great favour on His Messenger by linking his *Sunna* so closely to His Book. Furthermore, that favour was not bestowed upon any other created being.

The picture that is painted by the verse with which we began this section is the same picture that Ibrahim, peace be upon him, hoped for when he built the foundations of the House with his son Isma'il and prayed, "*Our Lord, raise up among them a Messenger from them to recite Your Signs to them and teach them the Book and Wisdom and purify them. You are the Almighty, the All-Wise.*" (2:128)

The supplication of Ibrahim happened to coincide with what Allah had decreed before the dawn of time, for it was His Decree that a Messenger should come to complete His *Deen* and perfect His blessing upon the believers and it was His Decree that the seal of the religions should be none other than the eternal, timeless *Deen* with which He is pleased. That *deen* is Islam,

"Today I have perfected your deen for you and completed My blessing upon you, and I am pleased with Islam as a deen for you." (5:3)

"The deen in the sight of Allah is Islam." (3:19)

If the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is the first of the Muslims and if the *Deen* in the sight of Allah is Islam, then the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is the premier religious figure without exception. He reached a level more advanced than any single person in the past, present or future; and his primacy stretches back to the beginning of mankind.

There is no doubt that Adam, peace be upon him, was a Muslim – but he was not the first of the Muslims, even though he was the progenitor of mankind. There is no doubt that Nuh, peace be upon him, was a Muslim – but he was not the first of the

Muslims, and so on and so forth. All of the earlier Prophets were Muslims, but none of them were the first of the Muslims. Indeed, it was not possible for any of them to have been the first of the Muslims, for even though the *Deen* they brought was Islam, it was not the perfected and completed form of Islam, which was the Qur'an. Allah says: "*And We have sent down the Book to you with truth, confirming and conserving the previous Books.*" (5:48) And He says: "*Follow the best that has been sent down to you from your Lord.*" (39:52)

He is the first of the Muslims in the present, and the first of them in the future, to the Day during which the earth is changed to other than the earth, and the heavens likewise, and to beyond. May Allah bless you and grant you peace, o Messenger of Allah.

The Prophet was a mercy

Allah, glory be to Him, says about the distinguishing feature of the Islamic Message and the defining feature of the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace: "*We have sent you only as a mercy to all the worlds.*" (21:106)

The sending of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was a mercy from the viewpoint of the Islamic Message and from the viewpoint of his personality. Indeed, he, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, himself declared, "I am a mercy that has been bestowed."

He, peace be upon him, derived his message and his essence from the All-Merciful, and his message and his essence from the Most Merciful. He conducted his life in the Name of the All-Merciful, the Most Merciful, and gave people the good news of Islam (i.e. delivered the message to them) in the Name of the All-Merciful, the Most Merciful. He was the Prophet of mercy and it was the Message of Mercy. Allah raised His Messenger, chose him for Himself, and raised him up with mercy. So the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was a mercy from the moment he was born.

If we want a useful but summarised account of all the ways in which the Prophet of Mercy, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was merciful, we need look no further than Khadija's

description of him when he came to her after the Revelation had descended upon him for the first time and told her, "I feared for myself that I might be mad."

She said, may Allah be pleased with her: "That could never be the case, by Allah! Allah would never humiliate you like that, for you maintain your family ties, take on other people's burdens, give to the destitute, receive your guests with hospitality and help those who have been afflicted by calamity."

This truthful description of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, expresses various aspects of mercy, and applied to him equally at all stages of his life. The Qur'anic verse "*We have sent you only as a mercy to all the worlds*" has a general sense and is not specific to any particular sort of mercy or recipient for that mercy. The comprehensive nature of his mercy is well illustrated by the following *hadith*: "The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was speaking on the subject of mercy and was calling people to practice it and informing them of its central position in the *Deen*. Thereupon some of the Companions, may Allah be pleased with them, said, "We are merciful towards our wives, children and family." This statement did not satisfy the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, because he considered it to be a limited understanding of something that should be truly universal and encompass everyone and everything. So the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, responded by saying, "That is not the [sort of mercy] that I am referring to. [What I am calling you to] is universal mercy"."

There is no doubt that acting with compassion towards one's family and one's nearest and dearest is a part of mercy, and indeed the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, encouraged his community to do that. But that is not the whole picture. What the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, wanted was for mercy to permeate every cell of the human being and for it to become a part of his nature so that he would be merciful instinctively. He wanted his Community to embody mercy to such a degree that it was as if they were fragments of Allah's Mercy, walking the earth and distributing it wherever they went. And indeed, if a person were to act thus, then he would have

stamped upon his own character that universal feature which characterises the Islamic Message (i.e. mercy) and would deservedly be encompassed by the Mercy of Allah.

The words and actions of the Messenger, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, were characterised by this distinguishing feature, as he was the perfect embodiment of mercy. The following account of the events surrounding the revelation of the verse "*It is not fitting for a Prophet to take captives until he has let much blood in the land. You desire the goods of this world, whereas Allah desires the Next World. Allah is Almighty, All-Wise*" (8:68), demonstrates this perfectly:

When the idolaters were defeated on the day of Badr, seventy of them were killed during the battle and seventy were taken captive. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asked for the advice of Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Ali on how to deal with them. Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "Prophet of Allah, these men are our relatives and brothers. I think that you should ransom them and then we can use the money to strengthen ourselves against the unbelievers. It is also possible that Allah may guide them and then they themselves would be a source of strength for us."

Then the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asked: "What do you think, Ibn al-Khattab?" He replied, "By Allah, I do not agree with the opinion of Abu Bakr. I think that you should place so-and-so (a relative of 'Umar) in my hands and let me cut off his head, then let 'Ali cut off the head of 'Aqil and Hamza kill his brother so-and-so (he meant 'Abbas), so that Allah will know that we have no leanings towards the idolaters."

By knowing the character of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and the code by which he lived his life, it is easy for us to guess the option that he chose: he decided to ransom them. He took the more merciful choice; the choice proposed by Abu Bakr, who was the closest of the Companions to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in character and the one who followed him the most closely. This merciful viewpoint of the Companion of the Cave was confirmed and added to by Allah in the Noble Qur'an, when He gave his

Prophet the choice, after a battle had ended, either to free his captives or to ransom them. Allah says: "*Tie their bonds tightly; and set them free or ransom them, when the war is finally over.*" (47:4)

Even before Badr, the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, opted for ransom, for after the expedition of 'Abdullah ibn Jahsh a year previously he had ransomed a couple of the idolaters.

After Badr, however, some of the Companions misunderstood the spirit of ransom, and began to look at it from a material point of view. They started to think of the value of their captives and whether they were rich or poor, and they started to calculate the amount that they could demand for each one. In order to correct this faulty way of viewing the matter, Allah sent down the verse mentioned above, i.e. "*You desire the goods of this world*" (8:68).

Al-Qastallani said about this verse in his book, *al-Mawahib al-ladunniyya*, "This verse demonstrates the special favour that Allah bestowed upon His Prophet and the way that He preferred him over all other Prophets. It is as if He were saying, 'It is not fit for any other Prophet to take captives'."

Qadi Bakr ibn al-Ala' said, "In this verse, Allah informed His Prophet that his interpretation was in harmony with what He had prescribed for him in making booty and ransom lawful."

The Seal of the Messages that came from Heaven was the Message of Mercy, and no Prophet before the Prophet of Mercy was permitted to take prisoners until "he had let much blood in the land". When the Prophet of Mercy was sent with the Message of Mercy, Allah permitted him to act freely with mercy and to do something that no Prophet had been permitted to do before: he was permitted to ask for ransom. Then He honoured him even more by opening up for him another door of mercy. He gave him the choice between freeing them for nothing and ransoming them.

That is the reason why the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, asked for ransom; and it must not be looked at from a material angle, for it was not done in that spirit. Therefore Allah rebukes those who considered the matter in a material light and desired the goods of this world, for the goods of this world weigh nothing in the Scales of Allah. Allah values only the Next World. As well as rebuking the Muslims, Allah directs

them to how they should act and whom they should emulate, when He says *"You have an excellent model in the Messenger of Allah."* (33:21)

The proof that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, took the right course lies in the fact that Allah did not command the Muslims to return the ransom money, even though that would have been very easy for them, and did not break any agreement reached by His Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. In fact, it would have been impossible for His Prophet to have done anything that went against Allah's Wishes as he never spoke or acted from whim.

The merciful nature of the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was so great that he felt great compassion for his enemies and great sadness when they were not guided:

"So do not let yourself waste away out of regret for them." (34:8)

"Perhaps you may destroy yourself with grief, chasing after them, if they do not believe in these words." (18:6)

The following account of the way the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, conducted himself with one of the desert Arabs is very indicative of the compassionate methods used by the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in educating people. Even though this incident concerned one particular person, its significance is much broader and more comprehensive.

One day, a desert Arab came to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, and asked him for alms. He gave it to him and asked him if he had treated him well. The desert Arab replied, "No, you have not treated me well!" The Muslims were angered by that and got up to deal with him, but the Messenger of Allah indicated that they should desist. Then he got up, went into his house, sent for the man, and gave him extra. When he had done that, he asked the man again if he had treated him well. The man replied, "Yes, may Allah reward you with good from your family and tribe."

Thereupon the Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said to him, "You said what you said and that caused certain feelings [of outrage] in the hearts of my Companions. If we have

done rightly by you, then stand in front of them and say what you have just said to me, so that their feelings [of outrage] against you may disappear. The desert Arab said that he would do as the Prophet asked, and then departed. He came back later and the Prophet said, "This desert Arab said what he said and so we gave him more. Now he claims that he is content. Is that so?"

He replied, "Yes, may Allah reward you with good from your family and tribe." Thereupon the Prophet said: "The likeness of this man and me is that of a man who has a she-camel that has run away. People try to catch it, but that only makes it shy away more, so its owner says to them, 'Clear the way between me and my she-camel, for I am more compassionate towards it and more knowledgeable about it than you.' He goes around to face it and then pushes it back with clods of earth until it comes and kneels down; then he saddles it and mounts it. If I had left you to your own devices when the man said what he said, you would have killed him and he would have entered the Fire."

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, even felt merciful towards his enemies. On the day of Uhud, when he was in dire straits and surrounded by his enemies, one of his Companions said to him, "If you would only curse them, Messenger of Allah!" He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, answered, "I have been sent as a mercy, not as a curser."

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, would always pray for a person to be guided in situations when most others would have prayed for that person to be punished. He wanted the Muslims – or rather, he wanted all of mankind – to treat one other with affection and compassion. One time he was asked, "Which people do you love the most?" He replied, "Those people who benefit other people the most." Another time he was asked, "What is the best kind of action?" He replied, "Making a believer happy." He also said, "The believer who has the most perfect *iman* is the one who has the best character and is the most kind to his family."

His mercy, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, encompassed everything, even animals. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said this in order to encourage people to be merciful towards ani-

mals: "A man was walking and suddenly became very thirsty. He came to a well and drank from it. When he left the well he came upon a dog that was so thirsty that it was licking the moist earth. He said to himself, 'That dog is suffering just as I was a few moments ago', so he filled up his leather sock, took hold of the dog's mouth and helped it to drink. Allah rewarded for him that and forgave him." They asked, "Messenger of Allah, have we a reward for [helping] animals?" He replied, "Yes, you have a reward [for helping] anything that has a moist liver."

And he also said, may Allah bless him and grant him peace: "A woman will be punished on account of a cat which she imprisoned until it died. While it was locked up, she neither fed nor watered it, and would not [even] allow it to eat the vermin of the earth."

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace was a mercy: he was a mercy to all the worlds.

"Do not summon the Messenger as you summon others"

Allah, Exalted be He, said, addressing the believers: "*Do not make your summoning of the Messenger the same as your summoning of one another.*" (24:61)

We, as Muslims, must recognise the station of this man whom Allah singled out to receive revelation, chose to deliver His Message and selected to be a bearer of good news and a warner. We must afford this man whom Allah favoured over all of creation the respect and honour that is his due.

It is not correct for us to summon or call to this light-giving lamp, this gentle and merciful being, in the way that we might call Zayd or 'Umar. In other words, it is not right for us to call him by his name or by his *kunya*; we should not say 'O Muhammad' or 'O Abu'l-Qasim'. Rather, we should only address him by his honorific titles: we should say 'O Messenger of Allah', or 'O Prophet', or 'O Imam of the Messengers', or 'O Seal of the Prophets', or similar titles.

As as-Sawi remarked in his supercommentary on the *Tafsir* of the two Jalals (*'al-Jalalayn'*), it can be inferred from this verse that it is only permissible to address the Messenger of Allah in a way that is respectful to him, whether during his life or after his death.

Furthermore, it may be understood from this that anyone who belittles the Messenger of Allah is an unbeliever and will be cursed in his world and the Next.

Allah, glory be to Him, says in the beginning of *Surat al-Hujurat*: “*You who believe, do not put yourselves forward in front of Allah and His Messenger.*” (49:1) That is, do not proceed with any matter, whether it be a matter of speech or action, unless you first get the permission of the Allah and His Messenger, for anything that you do without the permission of Allah and His Messenger has taken you from the Straight Path.

Ad-Dahhak said, “This command is universal and applies equally to fighting and the laws of the *Deen* so, in other words, ‘Do not embark on any matter without Allah and His Messenger. And have *taqwa* of Allah. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing.’”

“*You who believe, do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet; and do not be as loud when speaking to him as you are when speaking to one another; lest your actions should come to nothing without your realising it.*” (49:2)

“*Those who lower their voices when they are with the Messenger of Allah are people whose hearts Allah has tested for taqwa. They will have forgiveness and an immense reward.*” (49:3)

As for those who have bad manners and rudely called him from outside his private quarters, like crude-mouthed desert Arabs, they had defective intellects: “*As for those who call out to you from outside your private quarters, most of them do not use their intellect. If they only had been patient until you came out to them, it would have been better for them. But Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful.*” (49:4-5)

Even if a person simply desires to speak with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, he should give *sadaqa* as a precursor to that. Allah says in *Suratu'l-Mujadala*: “*You who believe, when you consult the Messenger privately, precede your private consultation by giving sadaqa – that is better for you and purer. But if you cannot find the means, Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful.*” (58:12)

This noble verse indicates the fact that not giving *sadaqa* as a precursor to consulting the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is a sin. For it states that if a person does

not find *sadaqa*, Allah's stance towards him is one of forgiveness and mercy; but a person is not in need of forgiveness unless he has done something wrong. However, this forgiveness is for the person who does not have the ability to give *sadaqa*, or feels that he is unable to do so. Allah says: "*Are you afraid to give gifts of sadaqa before your private consultation?*" (58:13) "Did your fear of poverty cause you not to do so, then you came to regret that and ask for forgiveness? Then correct your ways, so that Allah may forgive you; and confirm your good intention by establishing the prayer in the most perfect way, paying *zakat* gladly and obeying Allah and His Messenger in the great and small. For there is no doubt that Allah is aware of everything that you do." Allah says: "*If you do not, and Allah relents towards you, at least establish the prayer and pay zakat, and obey Allah and His Messenger. Allah is aware of what you do.*" (58:13)

Allah also says: "*O Prophet, We have sent you as a witness, a bringer of good news and a warner, and as a caller to Allah by His permission and a light-giving lamp. Give good news to the believers that they will receive immense favour from Allah.*" (33:45-47)

The worth and rank of the Prophet

Allah, glory be to Him, says: "*You who believe, do not put yourselves forward in front of Allah and of His Messenger. And be godfearing. Allah is All-Hearing, All-Knowing. You who believe, do not raise your voices above the voice of the Prophet; and do not be as loud when speaking to him as you are when speaking to one another, lest your actions should come to nothing without your realising it. Those who lower their voices when they are with the Messenger of Allah are people whose hearts Allah has tested for taqwa. They will have forgiveness and an immense reward. As for those who call out to you from outside your private quarters, most of them do not use their intellect. If they had only been patient until you came out to them, it would have been better for them. But Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Most Merciful.*" (49:1-5)

This noble verse is nothing more than a sample selected from many other verses that are cited in the Qur'an to demonstrate the immense worth and rank of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.

The virtues of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, would have filled an ocean, but his immense character is summarised in Allah's Words at the end of *Suratu'l-An'am*. Allah says: "Say: 'My prayer and my rites, my living and my dying, are for Allah alone, the Lord of all the worlds, Who has no partner. I am commanded to be like that and I am the first of the Muslims.'" (6:164-165) Every virtue is in absolute submission to Allah (Islam). The life of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, was purely for Allah: everything he did was for Allah and everything that he left was for Allah. He was a man of Allah in the sense that he was completely lost in Allah; so he willed what Allah willed, loved what Allah loved, and hated what Allah hated.

This absolute submission to Allah manifested itself in the fact that his life was a *jihad* in His Way. Losing oneself completely in Allah is not something negative, but is *jihad*. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, fought *jihad* with every cell of his body and every thought in his head. His *jihad* was fought on many levels – moral, martial and societal.

The moral *jihad* started with himself; he attained such an exalted moral rank that Shaytan had no power over him whatsoever. His rank was such that Allah described in more than one place in the Qur'an as a light and a light-giving lamp. He attained such a degree of purity and transparency that he became the perfect vessel for the light of Allah, allowing it to shine forth from his being undiminished. His soul became so pure that he reached a degree of nearness never before permitted to a created being, as Allah indicates in His Noble Qur'an when He says "*He was two bow-lengths away or even closer.*" (53:9). Indeed, he went even further than that and reached the Lote Tree of the Furthest Limit. Then he went beyond the Lote Tree – or, to put it another way, he went to the edge of existence and beyond it to the Highest Assembly. He went beyond the boundaries of this world and into the world of lights, a world whose boundaries had never before been breached – even by any of the angels brought close.

He fought *jihad* on a societal level as well, by enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong. He created a society that sold itself for the Cause of Allah – a fraternal society and a society in which virtue prevailed and Allah's Word was uppermost.

Finally he fought martial *jihad*. As the great 'Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, said: "In the heat of battle, when the fighting was at its most intense, we sought protection in the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, for there was none closer than him to the enemy lines."

He remained firm at the Battle of Uhud and at the Battle of Hunayn and did not flee when many great and heroic warriors did – he stood his ground and fought on. He, peace be upon him, is the one who said, "By Him Who has the soul of Muhammad in His hand, I would love to fight in the Way of Allah and be killed, and then fight again and be killed again and then fight again and be killed once more."

May Allah bless you and grant you peace, O Messenger of Allah, and all those who follow you in enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong.

Love for the Messenger of Allah

Allah says: "Say: 'If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, or your tribe, or any wealth you have acquired, or any business you fear may slump, or any house which pleases you, are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger and doing jihad in His Way, then wait until Allah brings about His command. Allah does not guide people who are deviators.'" (9:24)

Al-Bukhari, may Allah have mercy on him, related a *hadith* conveying the same idea. He related that 'Abdullah ibn Hisham said, "We were with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace. He took hold of the hand of 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, who said to him, "Messenger of Allah, you are more beloved to me than everything except for myself."

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "No, by Him Who holds my soul in His Hand, none of you truly believes until I am more beloved to you than yourself". 'Umar said, "You are now, by Allah, even more beloved to me than myself." The Prophet, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, "Now, 'Umar."

What the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, meant when he said "Now," was that 'Umar's *iman* had

become sound and he had reached a state that Allah and His Messenger loves.

Love of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, entails following his example and copying his conduct and actions. Indeed this is the essential condition of loving him, and if one does not strive to emulate him he does not truly love him.

The main way to follow the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is by submitting oneself to Allah, glory be to Him. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, sold his self and his wealth to Allah – he was the first of the sellers, and the most perfect of them. In doing so, the Prophet, peace be upon him, his Companions, and those who follow his example have made Allah's Statement come true. For Allah says: *"Allah has bought from the believers their selves and their wealth in return for the Garden. They fight in the Way of Allah and they kill and are killed. It is a promise binding on Him in the Torah, the Gospel and the Qur'an; and who is truer to his contract than Allah? Rejoice, then, in the bargain you have made. That is the great victory."* (9:112)

In the contract of faith, Allah buys a person's self and wealth in exchange for Paradise. So if a person is miserly with either his self or his wealth in the Way of Allah, he has failed to fulfill the contract of faith.

Love of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, means preferring what he loves over what your own self desires; following his guidance; and acting according to his *Sunna*, both in what you do and in what you do not do. Indeed, true love of the Messengers lies in preferring them over everyone else: over your parents, over your children, over your wives, over yourself. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said, regarding this, "By Him Who holds my soul in His Hand, none of you is truly a believer until I am more beloved to him than his father, his son and all other people."

From this point, the consequences of loving the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, should now be clear to us. If there is a conflict of interest between our personal desires and the *Deen*, we must choose the *Deen* every time. So, for

example, if we were forced to choose between all the riches of the world and the prayer, it would incumbent upon us to choose the prayer every time.

The author of *al-Kashshaf*, in his commentart on the verse with which we began this section, said: "This verse is very hard – in fact it is difficult to find a verse harder than it. It is as if it reproaches people for the lax way in which they have taken on the *Deen*. So anyone who is truly godfearing should look to himself and see whether his faith is truly strong and whether he has truly taken on Allah's *Deen* to the extent that he prefers it over his parents, children, siblings, wives, family, money, home and all the other portions of this world. He should examine himself and see whether he is prepared to give that all up for the sake of Allah, or whether Shaytan has deceived him by making him prefer the good things of this world. As for what follows, true love of him, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, involves taking on his virtuous attributes and working to make those virtues predominant in society."

The relation of the believers to the Prophet

Allah says: "*The Prophet has more right to the believers than their own selves, and his wives are their mothers. But blood relations have more rights to one another in the Book of Allah than the believers and Muhajirun. All the same, you should act correctly by your friends; that is inscribed in the Book.*" (33:6)

This is a divine declaration of what the relationship of the believers with the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, should be: they should believe that he has more right to them than themselves, regardless of whether they were present when he was alive or not.

It is their duty to ransom him with themselves and with everything they own. They must obey him before they obey themselves, both in religious and worldly matters.

This is the divine declaration that everyone whose heart has been lit up by the light of faith acts by, and that everyone whose heart has deviated from true guidance disregards.

In more than one verse in the Qur'an, Allah gives voice to this concept, for He, glory be to Him, makes obeying the Messenger the same as obeying Him. Allah says: *"Whoever obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah."* (4:79)

Allah, glory be to Him, denies the faith of those who do not unhesitatingly hand control of all their affairs over to the Messenger of Allah, and seek his judgement in their disputes with others: *"No, by your Lord, they are not believers until they make you their judge in the disputes that break out between them, and then find no resistance within themselves to what you decide and submit themselves completely."* (4:64)

Just as it was incumbent upon the Muslims of his time but to make the Messenger of Allah their judge during their lives, it is equally incumbent upon us to use his *Sunna* and teachings to judge between us today, now that he has moved on to a higher plane. Indeed, the *Sunna* and his teachings have been so well preserved that it is possible for us to say that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, did not die but is still among us, perfuming existence with his pure fragrance. He, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is alive in his sayings, actions and states, leading those who follow his guidance and cling to his *Sunna* to the Eternal Gardens of Paradise.

Allah takes this concept to its absolute furthest limits and announces that the Prophet has more right to people than everything that they hold dear, as is clear from the verse quoted at the beginning of Section 5.

The Messenger of Allah is the best model

The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is the best example that we can follow when it comes to speech, actions and character. Allah says: *"You have an excellent model in the Messenger of Allah, for all who put their hope in Allah and the Last Day and remember Allah much."* (33:21)

As-Sawi said in his supercommentary on the Jalalayn *Tafsir*: "It is obligatory to follow the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, in his words, actions and states, as he

did not speak or act from whim. On the contrary, all of his words, actions and states were directly from his Lord."

For that reason, one of the gnostics said: "He singled you out for guidance in every matter, so you only want what Allah wants."

Allah, glory be to Him, says in *Suratu'n-Najm*, emphasising the statement with an oath: "*By the star when it descends, your companion is not misguided or misled; nor does he speak from whim. It is nothing but Revelation revealed.*" (53:1-4)

Although it is obligatory to follow the Messenger of Allah, there are certain preconditions that a man must fulfill if he wants to do so correctly. These conditions are mentioned in the noble verse with which we began this section.

The first precondition is that a man should put his hope in Allah, glory be to him. Allah defines what is meant by putting one's hope in Allah when He says: "*So let him who hopes to meet his Lord act rightly and not associate anyone in the worship of his Lord.*" (18:105)

Therefore, right action and not associating anything with Allah are the two requisites for anyone who sincerely puts his hope in Allah.

Ibn Kathir wrote about this in his *tafsir*, "It is upon these two bases that actions are accepted. For an action to be accepted it must be carried out sincerely for Allah, and correctly according to the *Shari'a* of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace."

The second precondition for following the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is putting one's hope in the Last Day. Putting one's hope in the Last Day means acting for that day: in other words, doing things that will cause Allah to be pleased with you on that day and make you one of those who receives shade on that day when there is no shade except for His shade.

Allah describes those who do not hope to meet Him, and those who do not put their hopes in the Last Day, as follows: "*As for those who do not hope to meet Us and are content with the life of this world and are at rest in it, and those who are heedless of Our Signs, their shelter will be the Fire because of what they earned.*" (10:7-8)

The third precondition for following the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, is plentiful *dhikr*. A man said to the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, "The laws of Islam are so many! Tell me of something to which I can cling." The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, "Your mouth should continually be moist with the *dhikr* ('remembrance') of Allah."

Allah, glory be to Him, says: "*Remember Allah repeatedly so that perhaps you will be successful.*" (8:46)

The Rank of the Messenger of Allah

As for the rank of the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, there is a sound narration from the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, that he said, "I shall be the master of the sons of Adam on the Day of Rising and that is no boast."

It is also related from Abu Hurayra, may Allah be pleased with him, that the Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, said:

"I will be the master of people on the Day of Rising. Do you know what that will entail? Allah will gather all people, the first of them and the last of them, on a single plain so that they all be seen and they all can be heard. The sun will be brought near to them and people will experience such sorrow and distress that they will not be able to bear or endure it. The people will say, 'Do you not see where you have been brought to and what has befallen you? Why do you not look for someone to intercede with your Lord on your behalf?'

Some people will say, 'What about your forefather Adam?' Thereupon they will go to Adam, peace be upon him, and say, 'You are the father of mankind. Furthermore, Allah created you with His own hand, breathed into you of His spirit, commanded the angels to prostrate to you, and allowed you to live in the Garden; so will you not intercede with your Lord on our behalf? Do you not see what has befallen us?' Adam will say, 'My Lord is angry today as He has never been angry before and as He will never be angry again. He forbade me [to eat from] the Tree and I

disobeyed him. O myself, myself, myself! Go to another: go to Nuh.'

They will go to Nuh, peace be upon him, and say, 'O Nuh, you are the first of the Messengers to be sent to the people of the earth, and Allah called you a thankful slave. Do you not see where we are and what has befallen us? Will you not intercede with your Lord on our behalf?' He will say, "My Lord is angry today as He has never been angry before and as He will never be angry again. [I may not intercede because] I made a supplication against my people [asking Allah to curse them]. O myself, myself, myself! Go to another: go to Ibrahim.'

They will go to Ibrahim, peace be upon him, and say, 'O Ibrahim, you are the Prophet of Allah and, from among the people of the earth, His close friend. So intercede with your Lord on our behalf. Can you not see what has befallen us?' He will say to them, "My Lord is angry today as He has never been angry before and as He will never be angry again. I told three lies [so I am not worthy to intercede for you]. O myself, myself, myself! Go to another: go to Musa.'

They will go to Musa, peace be upon him, and say, 'O Musa, you are the Messenger of Allah and He favoured you with His Message and Word above all other people, so intercede with your Lord on our behalf. Can you not see what has befallen us?' He will say, 'My Lord is angry today as He has never been angry before and as He will never be angry again. I killed a person whom I was not commanded to kill [so I am not worthy to be your intercessor]. Go to another: go to 'Isa.'

They will go to 'Isa, peace be upon him, and say, 'O 'Isa, you are the Messenger of Allah, His Word, which He cast into Maryam, and a Spirit from Him. [Furthermore], you spoke to people while in the cradle. So intercede with your Lord on our behalf. Can you not see what has befallen us?' 'Isa will say, 'My Lord is angry today as He has never been angry before and as He will never be angry again.' He did not mention any sin, [then he said], 'O myself, myself, myself! Go to another: go to Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.'

"Then they will come to me and say, 'O Muhammad, you are the Messenger of Allah, the Seal of the Prophets and Allah has

forgiven you your past and future wrong actions. So intercede with your Lord on our behalf. Can you not see what has befallen us?' I will go forth until I come [to the area] under the Throne, then I will fall down before my Lord, the Mighty and Exalted, in prostration. Then Allah will inspire me to praise Him and laud Him in such a way as no one has ever praised Him before. Then I will be told: 'O Muhammad, raise your head. Ask and your request will be granted. Intercede and your intercession will be accepted.' I will raise my head and say, 'My Community, O Lord! My Community, O Lord! My Community, O Lord!' Thereupon, I will be told: 'O Muhammad, admit those of your Community who will not be subject to the Reckoning to the Garden via the gate which is on the furthest right. As for the rest of your Community, they can share the other gates with everyone else.' By Him Who holds my soul in His Hand, the distance between the two sides of each of the gates to the Garden is like the distance between Makka and al-Hijr, or Makka and Bosra."

We would like to conclude this book with the following noble Qur'anic verses:

"It is He who raised up among the unlettered people a Messenger from them to recite His Signs to them and purify them and teach them the Book and Wisdom, even though before that they were clearly misguided – and others of them who have not yet joined them. He is the Almighty, the All-Wise. That is Allah's favour which He gives to whoever He wills. Allah's favour is indeed immense." (62:2-4)

Glossary

- Abu Jahl: One of the important men of Quraysh who was violently opposed to Islam.
- Abu Qubays: a mountain in Makka.
- adab: behaviour, manners.
- adhan: the call to prayer.
- Ansar: the "Helpers", the people of Madina who welcomed and aided the Prophet.
- 'Arafa: a plain fifteen miles to the east of Makka.
- 'Ashura': the 10th day of Muharram, the first month of the Muslim lunar calendar.
- 'Asr: the afternoon prayer.
- Aws: along with Khazraj, one of the two major tribes in Madina at the time of the Hijra.
- ayat: a verse of the Qur'an.
- Badr: a place near the coast, about 95 miles to the south of Madina.
- Banu: literally, sons, a tribe or clan.
- baraka: blessing, any good which is bestowed by Allah, and especially that which increases, a subtle beneficent spiritual energy which can flow through things or people.
- barzakh: the interspatial life in the grave between death in this world and resurrection on the Day of Rising.
- basmala: the expression "In the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate".
- Bismillah: the Arabic expression, "In the Name of Allah".
- Buraq: the mount on which the Prophet made the Night Journey.
- Dar an-Nadwa: the assembly of chiefs of Quraysh in Makka.
- deen: the life-transaction, literally the debt between two parties, in this usage between the Creator and created.
- dhikr: literally remembrance, mention. As commonly used, it means invocation of Allah by repetition of His names or particular formulae.
- dhimma: obligation or contract, in particular a treaty of protection for non-Muslims living in Muslim territory.

Dhu'l-Hijja: the twelfth month of the Muslim lunar calendar, in which the *Hajj* takes place.

Dhu'l-Majaz: the third market in pre-Islamic times at the time of the *Hajj*. It lasted for the first eight days of Dhu'l-Hijja, leaving it on the Day of *Tarwiyah*.

Dhuhr: the midday prayer.

Duha: forenoon, in particular the voluntary morning prayer.

faqih: plural *fuqaha'*: a man learned in knowledge of *fiqh* who by virtue of his knowledge can give a legal judgement.

Fajr: the dawn prayer.

Fatiha: "the Opener", the first *sura* of the Qur'an.

fatwa: an authoritative decision or statement on a point of law.

fiqh: the science of the application of the *Shari'a*. A practitioner or expert in *fiqh* is called a *faqih*.

fitna: inter-Muslim conflict, civil war.

fitra: the first nature, the natural, primal condition of mankind in harmony with nature.

ghusl: major ablution of the whole body with water required to regain purity after menstruation, lochia and sexual intercourse.

hadith: reported speech of the Prophet.

hadith qudsi: those words of Allah on the tongue of His Messenger which are not part of the Revelation of the Qur'an.

Hajj: the annual pilgrimage to Makka which is one of the five Pillars of Islam.

Haram: Sacred Precinct, a protected area in which certain behaviour is forbidden and other behaviour necessary. The area around the Ka'ba in Makka is a Haram, and the area around the Prophet's Mosque in Madina is a Haram.

hasan: good, excellent, often used to describe a *hadith* which is reliable, but which is not as rigorously authenticated as one which is sound (*sahih*).

Hira': a mountain two miles north of Makka where the Prophet used to go into retreat in a cave before the Revelation came to him.

Homage of ar-Ridwan: a pledge which the Muslims took to avenge 'Uthman when they thought that Quraysh had murdered him at al-Hudaybiyya in 6/628.

- Hudaybiyya:** a well-known place ten miles from Makka on the way to Jidda where the Homage of ar-Ridwan took place.
- Hunayn:** a valley between Makka and Ta'if where the battle took place between the Prophet and Quraysh pagans in 8/630.
- Iblis:** the personal name of the Devil. He is also called Shaytan or the "enemy of Allah".
- 'Id:** a festival, either the festival at the end of Ramadan or at the time of the *Hajj*.
- ijtiḥad:** to exercise personal judgement in legal matters.
- imam:** Muslim religious or political leader, also the leader of the group prayer.
- 'Isha':** the night prayer.
- iqama:** the call which announces that the obligatory prayer is about to begin.
- ishraq:** a supererogatory prayer which is performed about twelve minutes after sunrise.
- 'isma:** complete and total protection from performing deliberate wrong actions.
- i'tikaf:** seclusion, while fasting, in a mosque, particularly in the last ten days of Ramadan.
- Jahiliyya:** the Time of Ignorance before the coming of Islam.
- Jam':** al-Muzdalifa, a well-known place between 'Arafa and Mina, known as *al-Jam'*. The Day of *Jam'* means the Day of 'Arafat.
- jamarat:** the pillars stoned by the pilgrims during the *Hajj*.
- Jibril:** the angel Gabriel who brought the revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace.
- jihād:** struggle, particularly fighting in the way of Allah to establish Islam.
- jinn:** inhabitants of the heavens and the earth made of smokeless fire who are usually invisible.
- Jumu'a:** the day of gathering, Friday, and particularly the *Jumu'a* prayer, which is performed instead of *Dhuhr* by those who attend it.
- Ka'ba:** the cube-shaped building at the centre of the Haram in Makka, originally built by the Prophet Ibrahim.
- Khaybar:** a Jewish settlement to the north of Madina which was laid siege to and captured by the Muslims in the seventh year after the Hijra because of the Jews' continual treachery.

Khazraj: along with Aws, one of the two major tribes in Madina at the time of the *Hijra*.

khutba: a speech, and in particular a standing speech given by the Imam before the Jumu'a prayer and after the two 'Id prayers.

kitab: contract by which a slave acquires his freedom against a future payment, or payment by instalments, to his master.

kunya: a familiar but respectful way of addressing people as "the father of so-and-so" or "the mother of so-and-so".

Maghrib: the sunset prayer.

Majanna: the second major market in pre-Islamic times in the Hijaz. It lasted from the 21st to the end of Dhu'l-Qa'da, ending when the new moon of Dhu'l-Hijja was sighted. Then the merchants would then make for Dhu'l-Majaz.

Maqam Ibrahim: the place of the stone on which the Prophet Ibrahim stood while he and Isma'il were building the Ka'ba.

marfu': "elevated", a narration from the Prophet mentioned by a Companion without the last link in the chain of transmission, e.g. "The Messenger of Allah said..."

mawla: a person with whom a tie of *wala'* has been established, usually by having been a slave and then set free.

Mina: a valley five miles from Makka on the road to 'Arafa where the three *jamarat* (pillars stoned by the pilgrims) stand.

minbar: steps on which the Imam stands to deliver the *khutba*, or sermon, on Friday.

mithqal: the weight of one dinar, the equivalent of 72 grains of barley (equals 4.4 grams).

mu'adhdhin: someone who calls the *adhan* or call to prayer.

mudd: a measure of volume, approximately a double-handed scoop.

mufti: someone qualified to give a legal opinion or *fatwa*.

Muhajirun: Companions of the Messenger of Allah who accepted Islam in Makka and made *hijra* to Madina.

Muharram: the first month of the Muslim lunar year.

mutawatir: a *hadith* which is reported by a large number of reporters at all stages of the *isnad*.

Namus: the sacred law, received by a Prophet from Allah through an angel, who is sometimes also called *Namus*.

Negus: a generic term for the King of Abyssinia.

Qaswa': the Prophet's she-camel when he arrived in Madina.

- qibla:** the direction faced in the prayer which is towards the Ka'ba in Makka.
- qirat:** a twelfth of a dirham.
- Quba':** a village on the outskirts of Madina (originally about five km, or three miles) where the first mosque in Islam was built
- Quraysh:** one of the great tribes of Arabia. The Prophet Muhammad belonged to this tribe, which had great moral and financial power both before and after Islam came. Someone from this tribe is called a Qurayshi.
- Rabi' al-Awwal:** the third month of the Muslim calendar.
- Rajab:** the seventh month of the Muslim calendar.
- rajaz:** "trembling", a type of poetry with a particular metre which is easy on the ear and easily provokes emotions.
- rak'at:** a unit of the prayer consisting of a series of standings, bowing, prostrations and sittings.
- Ramadan:** the month of fasting, the ninth month in the Muslim lunar calendar
- raqa'iq:** emotive stories or *hadiths* which provoke feelings and emotions.
- Rawda:** literally "The Meadow", the area of the Prophet's Mosque between his grave and minbar, based on what the Prophet said: "What is between my house and my minbar is one of the meadows of the Garden."
- riba:** usury, which involves obtaining something for nothing through exploitation. The most common form is charging interest on loans.
- sa':** measure of volume equal to four *mudds*, a *mudd* being a double-handed scoop.
- sadaqa:** charitable giving for the Cause of Allah.
- Safa and Marwa:** two hills close to the Ka'ba between which pilgrims run seven times.
- Safar:** the second month of the Muslim lunar calendar.
- sahur:** the early morning meal taken before first light when fasting.
- saj':** rhymed prose.
- salam:** the greeting '*as-Salamu 'alaykum*'. It terminates the prayer.
- sawiq:** a mush made of wheat or barley (also with sugar and dates).
- Sha'ban:** the eighth month of the Muslim lunar calendar.
- shahada:** bearing witness, particularly witnessing that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.

It is one of the Pillars of Islam. It is also used to describe legal testimony in a court of law.

Shari'a: The legal modality of a people based on the Revelation of their Prophet. The final *Shari'a* is that of Islam.

Shawwal: the tenth month of the Muslim lunar calendar.

Shaytan: a devil, particularly Iblis.

shirk: the unforgiveable wrong action of worshipping something or someone other than Allah or associating something or someone as a partner with Him.

Sijjin: the register where the actions of the evil are recorded, or the place where the register is kept. Some say it is a stone underneath the lowest earth. (See Qur'an 83:7-8)

sira: 'conduct, behaviour, way of acting', hence a biography, particularly the biography of the Prophet.

Subh: the dawn prayer.

Sunna: the customary practice of a person or group of people. It has come to refer almost exclusively to the practice of the Messenger of Allah.

sura: chapter of the Qur'an.

Tabi'un: the second generation of the early Muslims, who did not meet the Prophet Muhammad, may Allah bless him and grant him peace, but learned the Deen of Islam from his Companions.

Tabuk: a town in northern Arabia close to Jordan. In the ninth year after the Hijra, the Messenger of Allah, hearing that the Byzantines were gathering a large army to march against the Muslims, led a large expedition, in his last campaign, to Tabuk, only to find the rumours premature.

tafsir: commentary on, or explanation of, the meanings of the Qur'an.

tahajjud: voluntary prayers performed at night between 'Isha' and Fajr.

Ta'if: an important town in the mountains, fifty miles to the east of Makka.

takbir: saying '*Allahu Akbar*', "Allah is greater".

taqwa: awe or fear of Allah, which inspires a person to be on guard against wrong action and eager for actions which please Him.

- Tarwiya:** "drawing water", the 8th of Dhu'l-Hijja, the day before 'Arafa when the pilgrims gather water and before Arafa when the pilgrims gather water and stay overnight at Mina.
- Tasawwuf:** Sufism, the science of the spiritual journey to Allah.
- Tashriq:** "drying meat in the sun", the days of the 10th, 11th, 12th and 13th of Dhu'l-Hijja, when the pilgrims sacrifice their animals and stone the *jamarat* at Mina.
- tawaf:** circumambulation of the Ka'ba, done in sets of seven circuits.
- tawhid:** the doctrine of Divine Unity.
- tayammum:** purification for the prayer with clean dust, earth, or stone, when water for ghusl or wudu' is unavailable or would be detrimental to health.
- Thamud:** a people to whom the Prophet Salih was sent; possibly a group of Nabateans.
- Thawr:** a well-known mountain near Madina.
- Trench:** the Ditch. In 5/627, the Makkans, assisted by the Jewish tribe of Banu Nadr and the Arab tribes of Banu Ghatafan and Banu Asad, marched on Madina with an army of ten thousand soldiers. The Prophet ordered a ditch to be dug on the unprotected side of Madina and manned constantly. The Makkans were forced to undertake a siege, which failed.
- Uhud:** a mountain just outside of Madina, where five years after the Hijra, the Muslims lost a battle against the Makkan idolaters. Many great Companions, and in particular Hamza, the uncle of the Prophet, were killed in this battle.
- 'Ukaz:** a place in the Hijaz in the region of Ta'if, southeast of Makka, where a fair was held once a year at the beginning of Dhu'l-Qa'da. It lasted until the 20th, when the merchants moved to the market of Majanna.
- Umma:** the body of Muslims as one distinct Community.
- 'umra:** the lesser pilgrimage to the Ka'ba in Makka performed at any time of the year.
- uqiyya:** a measure of silver, equal to forty dirhams or 123 grams of silver.
- Wadi'l-Qura:** a valley near the Gulf of 'Aqaba, north of the Red Sea, where a Jewish settlement was located at the time of the Prophet.

wali: someone who is a “friend” of Allah: that is, who possesses the qualities that make someone especially beloved to Him.

wisal: fasting for more than one day continuously.

wudu’: the lesser ritual washing to be pure for the prayer.

Yathrib: the ancient name for Madina.

zakat: a wealth tax, an annual tax on wealth, one of the five Pillars of Islam.

Zamzam: the well in the Haram of Makka.

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